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# “We Were the Outsiders and Treated as Such:” Community Activism and the Intersections of Ethnicity, Gender, Class, and Race Among Latinas in Milwaukee

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“WE WERE THE OUTSIDERS AND TREATED AS SUCH:”  
COMMUNITY ACTIVISM AND THE INTERSECTIONS OF ETHNICITY, GENDER,  
CLASS, AND RACE AMONG LATINAS IN MILWAUKEE

by

Patricia Torres Nájera

A Dissertation Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in Urban Studies

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2018

## **ABSTRACT**

### **“WE WERE THE OUTSIDERS AND TREATED AS SUCH:” COMMUNITY ACTIVISM AND THE INTERSECTIONS OF ETHNICITY, GENDER, CLASS, AND RACE AMONG LATINAS IN MILWAUKEE**

by

Patricia Torres Nájera

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2018  
Under the Supervision of Kristin M. Sziarto, PhD

This dissertation analyzes the activism of Latinas in Milwaukee during the 1970s and 1980s. I interviewed women involved in community organizing in that time and place; they shared with me their experiences, and their motivations related to community organizing campaigns. This dissertation explores how members of this group understood themselves to be outsiders, and how the shared outsider status among the Milwaukee Latinas and some white community organizers created solidarity to build Milwaukee’s Latin community. Drawing on in-depth interviews and archival research, I analyze the content of these stories, recognizing common issues of how each woman negotiated family, organizing campaigns, and the multiple power relations within each structure.

As Milwaukee transitioned from Polish American dominance on Milwaukee’s south side, with the increase of African Americans on the north side and Latinos arriving on the south side, these communities collided. One consequence was the rise of Latina activism. As Polish Americans fled the central city, Milwaukee’s south side residents experienced racism and discrimination in the public-school system, housing policies, employment opportunities, and public safety. Mary Anne McNulty and her work with SWEAT Associates was a key influence in community organizing

among Latinas. Her forty years of activism influenced the creation of Latin focused nonprofits and built a cadre of Latina and non-Latina organizers.

The community organizing efforts of Latinas was done while negotiating and navigating a male, white-centric society. Analyzing the stories of Latina activists reveals how these women learned to become more visible, not only in the pan-Latino diaspora, but in the broader community. Latinas found their voice and told “herstory” or “*ellacuenta*.” In Spanish, *ellacuenta* translates roughly to “she tells a story,” and “she matters.” Latinas made a difference in Milwaukee working on issues that mattered to them, and to their families and children.

My theoretical contribution to the scholarship of community organizing efforts is twofold. First, I use an intersectionality framework to draw attention to how the complexities of power and identity shaped how community organizers worked in Milwaukee. Second, I argue that Latinas engaged in activism using a “family” metaphor to engage and build solidarity in the community. This strong emphasis on creating a sense of belonging in the community along with activism is a practice I call “*la extension familiar*.” Creating a quasi-family in the community, key supporters in different campaigns became family-like members in the struggle for justices. Latinas valued the support of non-biological family members, but also encountered ambivalence in the process: They had to negotiate sexism, discrimination, and privileged power positions within their biological family, community organizing family, and the community at large.



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To my parents, Carlos and Antonía Torres,  
my husband and best friend, Paul Najera, my sons, Tomás and Austin,  
**and my daughters, Nyia and Ali.**

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In an interview with Antonia, a Puerto Rican born on the island, she recalled how she cried and cried, and did not want to come to the U.S. when she was a young girl. Antonia shared that her mother chose a private parochial school on Milwaukee's south side and remembered the shock of food choices, being bullied in the classroom, and how she quickly learned the cultural differences between the island and the mainland. Antonia, with no English-speaking skills, living in crowded conditions, sharing two rooms - one room for her uncle and brother, the other for herself, her mother, and her sister - had to make Milwaukee home (Antonia, Interview, 2016). Antonia realized that her uncle was one of the 500,000 who left after Operation Bootstrap, looking for manufacturing and migrant work (Ayala, 1996).

Antonia's opening recollection shows how, for many migrants, the dream of coming to the U.S. quickly turned to the stark realities of securing adequate housing, adjusting to the educational systems, and finding employment opportunities. Antonia's story illustrates why individuals who relocated to different parts of the U.S. needed various support systems to help with families in chain migration. When Antonia first arrived on November 10, 1962, she did not fully comprehend how all the dynamics that she encountered in her first days would be issues that she would work on for the next forty years of her life. By the age of 15, she had become an activist, and her activism would continue for years to come. Antonia became involved in promoting her identity and the community, participating in educational reform efforts, in open housing campaigns, and in the push for equal access to higher education.

This project allowed me to gather the stories of Latina activists in Milwaukee. Their stories were not only about their activist work in high school or subsequent years, but also about coming to Milwaukee, their family background, and uncovering the ways in which they helped build and

organize the Latino community on the south side of Milwaukee. My research examines Milwaukee's community organizing in the 1970s and 1980s, using discourse analysis from an intersectional lens to analyze how activists understood and addressed ethnicity, racial biases, gender hierarchies and other oppressive power relations in community organizing campaigns. I focused my research at the neighborhood level concentrating on the area from 1<sup>st</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Streets, National Avenue to Mitchell Street (See Appendix G) for a map of central locations.

### **Central Guiding Questions**

To bring out the voices of these women, the following questions guided my research:

1. How did Latin ethnic identity consciousness, migration and urban social geographies impact community organizing in Milwaukee?
2. How did national identity, gender, race, religion, and “outsider status” impact Latina activism in Milwaukee?
3. How did gendered discourses in community organizing shape an emotional closeness or bonds, create tensions, and otherwise shape community organizing in Milwaukee?
4. How can intersectionality inform and complicate analysis of multi-cultural community organizing?

This study accomplishes four things. First, it provides a scholarly narrative of the social, political, and economic situation in Milwaukee in 1970s, and the reasons Latinas were motivated to engage in community-organizing efforts. Second, it provides a comprehensive case study of SWEAT Associates and the work of Mary Anne McNulty – an important story of activism that has been absent from histories of Milwaukee's south side community. Third, it will address the gap in the literature about Latina activism in Milwaukee, with first-hand narratives about how the work was gendered, and how their style of organizing made lasting policy changes in the community. This research study will share how Latinas, who organized in the community, created and extended their family to the neighborhood. I call this way of thinking about community as family, “*la extension familiar*,” and show how the ambivalences of gendered power relations operated in this style of activism.

Last, these untold stories can be shared with younger and new communities to inspire, motivate, and showcase how a group of Latinas and non-Latinas worked to improve their neighborhood in Milwaukee. The following section provides an outline of each chapter.

## **Dissertation Structure**

Chapter Two encompasses literatures from five main disciplines. The first area is Latina/o studies, which informed my understanding of ethnic identity formation and consciousness, migration, and urban social geographies. This literature also addresses the unjust situations confronting Latinos in different regions of the U.S., and their responses of resistance, specifically, how gendered identities shaped activism for Latinas. Third, I read the literature on community organizing through the lens of intersectionality to analyze how the Alinskyite model has been adopted and transformed by white women and people of color. Fourth, I draw on critical race theory, LatCrit theory, and intersectionality theory to draw attention to how Latina activists managed and negotiated power structures. Using LatCrit theories I highlight the voices, concerns, interpretations and experiences of Latina activists. Each of these literatures is context for my work of examining the contributions of Latinos in Milwaukee, though I also show that the historical attention to Latina activism in this mid-size Midwestern city is sparse.

Chapter Three lays out the qualitative methodology I use to interpret Latinas' stories of activism. First, my own positionality of being bilingual and bicultural, being a newcomer to Milwaukee, and being a practitioner in the work of community organizing, provided an in-depth understanding of the field. In many ways, my experience provided context to the research design of this dissertation. Data was collected by conducting semi-structured interviews, where each participant shared their personal activism efforts in the 1970s and 1980s, the leadership styles they encountered, and how they worked through the complex demands of work, family, and community. To complement the interviews, archival research was completed with several collections relevant to

Milwaukee's Latin community at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University, the Wisconsin Historical Society, and the personal collection of Mary Anne McNulty.

Chapter Four, "Collisions of Diasporas: Interethnic and Interracial Relations between Milwaukee's Polonia and the new Latin community," examines the urban context of South Side Milwaukee that the Latina activists would soon be working in. In the late 1960s, Milwaukee's south side was dominated by the Polish American community, while African Americans lived on the north side. This chapter shows the political, social, and economic dominance of the Polonia community at that time. As the newest group - Latins - entered Milwaukee's south side, combined with the increase of Blacks in the north, along with the ease of transportation systems, whites fled Milwaukee's inner city. During this tumultuous time, both Blacks and Latins were involved in civil rights campaigns, opposing racist restrictive housing covenants, pushing for education reform, and fair employment practices. It is amidst these oppressive circumstances that Latinas rise in activist efforts to improve the quality of life for families and children.

Chapter Five, "An Outsider Organizes the South Side: Mary Anne McNulty's Activism and Impacts," shows the unconventional and gendered methods of SWEAT Associates, an organization co-founded by Mary Anne McNulty. Many of the Latina and non-Latina activists shared how Mary Anne's activism, her creating and forming initiatives or nonprofit organizations, motivated them to pursue activism in areas that were near and dear to them.

Chapter Six, "Perspectives from Women- Centered Activism," establishes the complexity of living in a male-dominated and white-female influenced society. Latinas share how they constantly encountered each of these leadership characteristics in city departments, churches, schools, employers, and with public officials. These women became astute in the power structures, saw the lack of representation at a community level and in government, and were motivated to engage in changing their visibility in public discourses. Latinas found their voice by convening and speaking at

meetings, writing news articles, organizing agendas, and working around the clock to improve the community. Unbeknownst to many in Milwaukee's Latin community, the contributions of these women shaped some of the longest serving nonprofit agencies in Milwaukee. They created new programs to address ethnic identity and advocated for the rights of women in public safety, employment, and housing.

Chapter Seven, "Activism with *Familismo*," situates how Latina activists used the metaphor of "family" to include the broader community. In this process, Latinas learned and appreciated the special bonds created by the men and women who engaged in activism work. These bonds created "quasi-family" members, sometimes these co-mothers, co-fathers, sisters and brothers in community organizing were *hermanos en la lucha* (family members in the struggle) and often provided more encouragement and support than their own biological families. My term, "*la extension familiar*," encapsulates this notion of community organizing extending the family to the community. Like any family structure, Latins shared multiple ranges and emotions within *familismo* activism. Latinas recognized and appreciated the nurturing, the protection, and the guidance of their *hermanos* in the struggle. At the same time, they also recognized moments of sexism, machismo, and privilege. Latinas learned to navigate and balance their roles in each of these situations, often building strong coalitions and bonds with other women.

Finally, the last chapter considers how Latina activism in the 1970s compares to activism in the 2010s. The themes of overcoming interethnic and interracial disparities and how the racial overtones in all aspects of society motivated Latinas and non-Latinas to organize. The gendered work of community organizing emphasized women being more inclusive, collaborative, communicative, flexible and accommodating to meet the needs of women and children. I will share my opinion of the limitations of my research along with future opportunities for the scholarship of community activism in Milwaukee. The oral histories of the women and men interviewed during the

early 1970s provide a perspective of experiences in Milwaukee's Latin community when the city was undergoing tremendous social, political and economic changes.

## Chapter 2

### Literature Review

My study of community activism and the intersections of ethnicity, gender, class and race among Latinas in Milwaukee is informed by five main areas of interdisciplinary and qualitative research: Latina/o studies, community organizing, intersectional analysis, LatCrit studies, and the utilization of storytelling methods. I draw upon and link the following areas of inquiry: The positionality of national identity, gender, race, religious beliefs and how “not belonging” impacts Latina activism as well as how gender shaped community organizing. I apply an intersectional framework to decipher power and identity in systems of oppression, and the importance of the extension of family into the community. Focusing on these issues, I strive to illuminate how Latinas and their white allies shared similar relationality by being outsiders, and how their situation created bonds of solidarity while negotiating and navigating a male-centric white society.

Recent and ongoing debate within the Latin community stems from the very question of how to refer to each other and how non-Latins refer to Latins. The term “Latina/o”, “Hispanic”, and “Latin” are generic terms that can describe individuals of Latin- American descent or origin living in the United States. In some cases, I will use the terms “Chicano/a” to describe a person of Mexican origin and “*Boricua*” for a person identifying as Puerto Rican living in the United States. The most recent iteration of describing Latins is the term “Latinx,” used to show a non-gender bias. Some Latins feel this is a term understood only by younger generations, and feel that the “x” meaning “no value” can exclude Latin elders. I do feel this term is an appropriate way to describe the persons of Latin descent and will use this term to describe Latins after 2010. Personally, I prefer to use the term Latin because it represents my own family being from Colombia, South America. Also, the term Hispanic is a term created by the U. S. government, an identity not defined by the people of Spanish Speaking descent. In addition, I prefer not to use Latino/a because it emphasizes



one gender over another. Again, the politics of identity is one of continued discourse in the Hispanic community.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 15.2 million Hispanics live in the United States (US Census, 2011). In Wisconsin, the Hispanic population is 370,000 or 6% of the state population (Pew Research Center, 2014), and the population in the City of Milwaukee is 108,000 or 18% of the city population (Levine, 2016). Today, Wisconsin ranks number 25, out of the 50 states, with the number of Hispanics of the US population (Pew Research Center, 2014). The growth of the Latinx community in urban and rural areas throughout the United States has been unprecedented, and in cities such as Milwaukee, the overall population would have diminished had it not been for the growth of the Latinx population (Garza, J., 2016).

---

Table 2.1 Race and Population, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Census Year	Population		
	White	Black	Hispanic
1960	675,572	62,458	N/A
1970	605,372	105,088	15, 589
1980	466,620	146,940	26,111

(U.S. Bureau of the Census. 1960, 1970, 1980).

---

The population changes are evident in Table 2.1 showing the dramatic decrease of the white flight from the central city to the suburbs, this shift in population occurred simultaneously as the African American and Hispanic populations moved and relocated to the area. Highly valuable scholarship has been written about the Hispanic populations in urban and rural regions in the United States, providing research on settlement patterns with different narratives of a variety of Hispanic experiences. In the past 40 years, a compilation of geographic settlement patterns has been described for Latin populations in the Southwest, Southeast, Northeast, and Midwest detailing the origins of each community, its formation, employment trends, interethnic and interracial relations

between newcomers and established residents (Pulido, 2006; Haslip-Viera, Rodriquez, Rodriguez, & Pantoja, 2005; Valle & Torres, 2000; Millard, Chapa, & Burillo, 2004; Fernandez, 2012; Vargas, 1993). As Latin communities were built, an ethnic identity was shaped, and many differentiating schisms of identity within the Latino/a Diaspora emerged including along the lines of gender, ethnicity, race, and class. As diasporic identity consciousness was formed, many Latina/o individuals identified disparities and inequitable situations in the Latin community. This motivated some to become politically engaged, and they began to organize the community. Other Latinos with higher levels of education, social class or lack of interest were uninvolved from organizing campaigns.

The study of how women have defined urban history and urban landscapes is an area studied by Dolores Hayden in *The Power of Place* (1995). Hayden captures how cities across the country could be so different if prominent sites and locations highlighted women's history. Daphne Spain (2002) examines how voluntary associations in cities welcomed and supported European immigrants and African Americans by providing support, relief, and salvation to overcrowded and filthy cities. Spain's study of municipal housekeeping helped create the public bath movement, new housing initiatives, increased parks and recreation for families, public health reform, and public safety programs from the mid-1800s to the early 1900s (2002). Missing from Daphne Spain's overview of voluntary associations and the impact on cities is how mutual aid societies built Mexican neighborhoods. A new narrative about the contributions of Latinas in urban and rural areas has been developed is demonstrated with scholarship on *mutualista sociedades* (mutual aid societies) and their work on civil rights for Latinos (Orozco, 2009; Ruiz, 2006, 1998; Hernandez, 1983).

The recognition of the lack of scholarship about Latinas in all regions has grown in the last forty years. Most of the scholarship about Latinas in the U.S. focused on the Southwest, Northeast, and large Midwestern cities such as Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis. In 2016, *Latina Lives in Milwaukee*

was written by Teresa Delgadillo, recounting the experiences of eleven Latinas who share narratives about their family, community, work, and careers. Forthcoming in May 2018, *Somos Latinas: Voices of Wisconsin Latina Activists* will be published to share stories about women throughout Wisconsin who engaged in activism. My goal is to build on these accounts of activist efforts by previously unknown Latinas with a close examination of how ethnicity, gender, class, and race among Latinas in activist efforts were carried out in Milwaukee.

All this relevant literature has allowed me to engage and learn from each discipline, I plan to build on the history of Latin migration patterns in the U.S., community organizing theory, critical race theory, LatCrit theory, and intersectional theory to understand the impact of Latina activism in Milwaukee during the 1970s and 1980s. From an intersectional lens, I will answer how a gendered, racialized, and segregated city did not deter Latinas from building their Latin community.

### **Research Questions and Theoretical Framework**

Latina activism in Milwaukee during the 1970s raises many interesting questions about how women who were raised in traditional Latino family culture, to solely do “women’s work,” broke out of the mold. These women expanded their family work into the neighborhood, and entered a new line of work, community organizing. My case study will examine Milwaukee’s Latino community in the early 1970s, using discourse analysis from an intersectional lens to interpret gender hierarchies, citizenship competition, and racial biases within the pan-Latino diaspora and local community organizing efforts. With this context in mind, my research is sparked by the following questions:

1. How did Latinx ethnic identity consciousness, migration and urban social geographies impact community organizing in Milwaukee?
2. How did national identity, gender, class, race, religion, and “outsider status” impact Latina activism in Milwaukee?
3. How did gendered discourses in community organizing shape an emotional closeness or bonds, create tensions, and otherwise shape community organizing in Milwaukee?
4. How can intersectionality inform and complicate analysis of multi-cultural community organizing?

To begin to answer these questions, I studied the history and migration patterns of the two largest Latin groups to the United States, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. Understanding their motivations and interests for locating to certain regions allowed me to appreciate how and why they settled in the Great Lakes Region. The next section provides a review of the literature of Latin migration in the Southwestern, Northeastern, and Midwestern states.

### **Oppression of Latinos and Their Resistance**

Latin communities formed amidst various power relations, with colonial power relations playing a key role. Facing the challenges of racialization and discrimination, Latin communities responded through mutual aid, various forms of political organizing, and ethnic identity formation. Internal colonialism (Barrera, 1979; Gutiérrez R. A., 2004) was exercised through differential citizenship for Mexican Americans and Puerto Ricans, policing, and property taxes that marginalized Latinos. The control of minority groups was done through segregation, divestment, surveillance, and criminalization of minority groups (Tuck & Yang, 2012). The U.S. imperialist territorial grabs in the Southwest, Puerto Rico, and elsewhere during the Spanish American war, not only set up U.S. territorial control, but also established the U.S. as a white settler state (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). Mexican Americans with U.S. citizenship were repeatedly racialized, grouped with non-citizens, allotted lesser jobs and wages, and even deported.

The social and historical geographies of Latinos migrating or relocating throughout the U.S. vary according to one's scale of analysis. For some Latinos, both immigrants and citizens, they can analyze and be analyzed from a municipal, regional, urban, or rural standpoint. Such geographies must take into account how policies and practices continue to create racialized landscapes: We must examine actions by land use planners, and city planning commissions, to understand how exclusionary white spaces are created. The spatial discourses that happen or do not happen with

wealthy versus impoverished people are inherent in racialized geographies (Barracough, 2009; Bonds, 2013; Pulido, 2000).

Latin communities developed with Mexicans and Chicanos in the Southwest, and Puerto Ricans in the Northeast and Southeastern parts of the United States. Many Hispanic communities existed in large cities such as, Los Angeles, San Antonio, New York, Chicago, and Miami. Some Latins were attracted to secondary, mid-sized, cities where work was more abundant, with increased affordable housing options, and a higher standard of living (Rodriguez M., 2011; Valdés, 2005; Millard et. al, 2004; Fernandez, 2012). I now will turn to Mexicans and Chicanos in the Western part of the US.

### **Mexicans and Chicanos in the Southwest**

The U.S.-Mexico War (1846-1848) ended with the U.S. seizing a large swath of Mexican territory, resulting in over 80,000 Mexicans who had the supposed “option” of becoming U.S. citizens, and maintaining their land holdings per the Treaty of Hidalgo (Suárez-Orozco & Pérez, 2002). The Hidalgo Treaty declared equality between Mexicans and Americans, but many of the Latinos faced squatters on their ranches, and the Mexican elite lost all power to the Anglo community (Montejano, 1987; Sánchez, 1995). From 1848 through the mid-1960s, different federal policies (Sánchez, 1995) were created to deal with Mexican migration. During the depression in the late 1920s and 1930s, Mexicans faced discrimination when the federal government created a policy to repatriate Mexicans and Mexican Americans back to Mexico, because of the scarcity of jobs and the drain on social services (Baderrama & Rodríguez, 2006; Garcia, 1991; Ruiz, 1987). The needs of agricultural food processing resulted in the “Bracero program,” a bi-lateral agreement between Mexico and the United States to allow guest workers from Mexico to the U.S. from 1942 to 1964 (Jenkins & Perrow, 1977; Flores, 2013). As Latino communities grew in the southwest, Latinos experienced relentless discrimination in real estate ventures, restrictions on purchasing goods from

neighborhood businesses, or refused entry to swimming pools, theaters, and restaurants (Ruiz, 1998; Orozco, 2009).

To combat this inequality in every aspect of their lives, a group of middle-class, Mexican and Mexican American professionals created the League of United Latin-American Citizens (LULAC); to pursue rights and privileges for its members (Oboler, 1995). LULAC became known as an exclusionary group that tailored to a specific class of Latinos, resulting in a schism within the Mexican American community. On the other end of the spectrum were Latinos who identified with the working class and focused on Mexican American civil rights. The Chicano Movement was part of the Mexican American Civil Rights Movement in which activists advocated for reforms for farm workers, in educational practices, voting and political rights, and improved housing conditions (Rodríguez, 2000; Muñoz, 1989). Chicanos in the Southwest exhibited a greater awareness of political and ethnic consciousness claimed a new political identity searching for power and recognition. Muñoz writes the Chicano movement was a “quest for new identity and political power” (Muñoz, 2013, p. 15). The next section provides an overview of educational reform efforts in the Southwest, which were motivating, informing, and impacting educational reform in secondary cities such as Milwaukee in the 1970s.

### **Educational reform in the Southwest**

The structural inequities faced by many first and second-generation Mexicans, compared to Anglo children, was the impetus for Mexican and Latin mobilization efforts on educational reform. Several Chicano youth organizations developed in distinct regions of the United States, with the Crusade for Justice in Denver, Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in Texas, and the Chicano Student Movement of Aztlan in California in the late 1960s. George Sanchez notes the separate and unequal learning environments between whites and Latino/a children (1995). School policies enforced assimilation and acculturation practices, meaning Latino/a children were forced to

deny their cultural heritage. The Spanish language was prohibited in the classroom, and their academic instruction did not focus on reading, writing, or arithmetic, but instead encouraged to become good industrial workers. These prejudicial practices toward Latino/a children, including facing discrimination, segregation, low performing schools, increasing high school dropouts, and the lack of any Mexican history or culture in schools, was the impetus and one of the first campaigns of the Chicano movement.

Chicanos developed political organizations to address the social inequities and structures of discrimination in mainstream society (Muñoz, 1989). The political evolution of young Chicanos, claiming their self-identity resulted in community organizing campaigns for equality and justice in police relations, quality schools, access to health centers, and political representation (Pulido, 2006). The political evolution of young Chicanos to become involved created tensions but inspired other educational reform efforts. The predominance of youth activism dealing with education issues resulted in the formation of the Mexican American Youth Organization (MAYO) in San Antonio. Chicanos and Mexicans addressed issues of inferior academic preparation, substandard schooling conditions with overcrowding and lack of bicultural or bilingual staff to meet the needs of Spanish-speaking students (Muñoz, 1989; Montejano, 2012). Chicanos developed political organizations to address the social inequities and structures of discrimination in mainstream society (Omi & Winant, 1986).

A radical youth organization emerged from the Chicano movement, the Brown Berets; they promoted leadership skills, completion of secondary schooling, pursuit of college education, self-determination, and self-empowerment (Montejano, 2012). Several chapters of the Brown Berets formed in cities in the Southwest, Northwest, Northeast, and the Midwest. Historian Marc Rodriguez's research in *Rethinking the Chicano Movement* (2014) builds on literature that heightens understanding of the Chicano movement in the Southwest by providing research on ethnic

discrimination. Rodriguez provides a comprehensive study of how the Brown Berets chapter in Milwaukee was instrumental in supporting educational, social, and employment opportunities.

In many ways, just as Chicano activism was inspired by the civil rights movement of African Americans, the Puerto Rican community mobilized with the creation of the Young Lords Party in New York and Chicago, an organization similar to the Brown Berets. It is important to note that Los Angeles became a destination for Puerto Ricans, and there the Young Lords Party addressed social justice issues similar to those of other minority communities (Pulido, 2000). The following section distinguishes the Puerto Rican from the Mexican American or Chicano experiences.

### **Puerto Ricans in the Northeast**

Puerto Rican migration and identity were shaped by historical, economic, and political events that started with the Spanish-American War (1898), Jones Act (1917), Operation Bootstrap (1948), and the creation of commonwealth status in 1952 (Acosta-Belén & Santiago, 2006). The geopolitical environment of promoting cheap labor, along with no taxes, produced under-development in Puerto Rico, ultimately encouraging thousands of Puerto Ricans to leave the island. In 1917, only 20,000 Puerto Ricans lived in New York City; that number increased to over 300,000 in 1952. New York City was the destination city for Puerto Ricans, who created “*colonias*,” or Puerto Rican communities supporting businesses, music, food, and social clubs (Sánchez Korrol, 1994). The formal and informal support networks in churches, restaurants, and organizations helped them develop their own community within the U.S. and eased adaptation for subsequent newcomers (Ruíz & DuBois, 2008).

The Young Lords modeled a 13-point program, outlining core principles and ideologies about self-determination, liberation, community control, opposition capitalism, self-defense, and hopes for a socialist society from the Black Panther movement (Ogbar, 2006). The Puerto Rican movement encompassed several different campaigns related to education, police relations, political



independence, reproductive rights, military involvement, and farmers' rights in the 1960s and 1970s. (Jeffries, 2003; Torres & Velázquez, 1998). Up until the late 1990s, minimal scholarship was written about a number of working class organizations for Puerto Ricans. The wide-ranging mission of Puerto Rican organizations encompassed groups interested in the liberation and independence from U.S. colonialism (Torres & Velázquez, 1998).

The process of identity formation for Puerto Ricans was considerably different from that of Mexicans. Cultural naturalism inspired Puerto Ricans to claim their unique history, recognizing the dual meaning of being Puerto Rican and a U.S. citizen, still being controlled by the United States government. Puerto Ricans embraced an ideology of accessing all the rights and privileges of white American citizens, yet found they faced the same, if not worse, conditions as other immigrant groups in terms of discrimination, segregation, unequal schooling practices, police harassment, and political representation.<sup>1</sup>

Recent studies about the Puerto Rican movement describe the significance of the migration patterns between the island and the mainland, and their relation to the formation of national identity (Dávila, 1997; Guerra, 1998). Thus, one point for consideration is in the context of incorporation into U.S. society, depending whether a person was Puerto Rican, born on the island, or born on the mainland (Schmidt, Barvosa-Carter, & Torres, 2000). This distinction is significant because U.S. born Puerto Ricans have access to greater educational and employment opportunities and could face worse educational and employment conditions because of deindustrialization in major urban areas across the U.S. (Schmidt et. al, 2000). Many Puerto Ricans migrated to the U.S. for permanent

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<sup>1</sup> Several other campaigns were particular to the Puerto Rican community including reproductive rights (Lopez, 1993); independence movement (Meléndez, 1988; Duany, 2003); environmental justice (Carruthers, 2008; Gandy, M., 2002); domestic violence (Rivera, 1995). Each one of these campaigns sheds light on important topics within the Latino community, and I used this research for my understanding about Latinas' organizing activities.

residency, hoping for a more successful life, but found “racial and cultural differences, along with prevailing structural inequalities, are barriers that have not been easy to overcome” (Acosta-Belén & Santiago, 2006, p. 169). For some Puerto Ricans, the ability to move freely from the mainland and the island misconstrued misperceptions of privileged status in the U.S.

In cities across the U.S., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, and African Americans began to understand the degrading circumstances in both, urban and rural areas were based on their ethnicity, race, or citizenship (Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Duany, 2003). In each community, organizations formed that were focused on improving the quality of life for families and children, fighting to change colonial practices of hierarchies based on whiteness and privilege (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). The impact of internal colonialism, of being treated as unequal, led to civil disobedience in Puerto Rican communities. These efforts served as an example of how the expansion of the Young Lords Party, with its hopes of building a strong national network, could be a threat to mainstream policy (Pulido, 2006).

The patterns of migration and Latin identity formation in the literature about the Southwest and Northeast can help us see similar patterns in the formation of Latin communities in Midwestern cities. These similarities include how transnational migration patterns resulted from perceptions that the Midwestern states offered better opportunities in employment, education, and quality housing. Once the newcomers arrived in mid-sized cities such as Milwaukee, the formation of a Latino community created both similar and distinct tensions like those in Latino communities in the coastal regions of the United States. Now I turn to the smaller literature on Latinos in Midwestern cities. This literature shows us the similarities of Latin migration patterns amidst colonial power relations, the development of ethnic identity consciousness, and how Latinos claimed their status in cities.

## **Latinos in the Midwest – Detroit, Chicago, Milwaukee, and Minneapolis**

According to Mike Davis (2000), the dynamic increase of Latin populations across the U.S. continues to reshape cities. Davis recognizes the important findings from Latino Studies scholars, urban sociologists, anthropologists, and immigration experts; he questions whether more exploration of urban theory with Latin settlement patterns in non-border cities is needed. Davis also explores the importance of Latin communities revitalizing and stabilizing cities across the U.S., especially in America's heartland. Davis addresses the relevance of Latin communities, concurring with research at The Julian Samora Research Institute about the impact of "*Latinos in the Heartland: The Browning of the Midwest*" (Aponte & Siles, 1994).

Davis provides an overview of dynamic neighborhoods in Chicago, (the formation of the Pilsen community), a vibrant community of Mexicans and Chicanos. Pilsen continues to be a close-knit area, supportive and safe-place for persons of Mexican origins. They established businesses, art museums and galleries, purchased homes, created schools where they encouraged and promoted cultural identity, and had a strong presence within churches (Fernandez, 2012; Innis-Jiménez, 2013).

The Latino populations in towns and cities in the Great Lakes Region grew as Mexicans filled a labor void in the agricultural fields, local industries, and railroads. From Minnesota, to Wisconsin, to Michigan, and Indiana, Chicanos and Mexicans worked to harvest sugar beets and other vegetables (Valdés, 2005, 2000; Vargas, 1993; Rodriguez, J., 2009). In Milwaukee, the first wave of Latinos or "*los primeros*" came to Milwaukee in the 1920s (Rodriguez, J., 2006). Other scholars wrote about similar migratory patterns to other urban and rural areas, increasing the knowledge about discrimination that migrant farm workers faced in the fields (Vargas, Z., 1993; Valdés, 2000, 2005; Gutiérrez, D. G., 1995).

For decades Mexican-Chicanos have settled in Chicago, making it one of the cities with the largest Latin populations. Gabriela Arredondo's study of how the Mexican community attempted to

become assimilated to the customs and traditions of the U.S. is published in *Mexican Chicago: Race, Identity, and Nation*. Their immigrant status, lack of English facility, language ability, and non-whiteness, re-racialized them and they became more “Mexican” through a “process of Mexicanization” (Arredondo, 2008, p. 170). Lilia Fernandez’s *Brown in the Windy City* provides the history of the Puerto Rican and Mexican communities in Chicago. Fernandez makes a significant contribution, explaining how the Latin community developed four distinct neighborhoods in Chicago when the city’s settlement patterns were Black or white. Issues of equity in housing, labor, and social services were causes championed by the Young Lords Organization in the 1970s and 1980s (2012). Lilia Fernández’s scholarship explains how Latina women became active, how they became involved in municipal politics, and how they changed the community.

Compared to the Mexican community, the Puerto Rican community in Chicago was smaller, but they joined forces when they faced exploitation and discrimination in the workplace. Felix Padilla suggests a new Latino identity, or “*Latinismo*”; an identity that surpasses any individual national identity (1985). Padilla’s research focuses on the synergy of Chicago’s Puerto Rican and Mexican communities as they joined forces, creating coalitions to address discrimination in employment sectors, building membership numbers, and increasing the capacity of neighborhood organizations. Nevertheless, differences emerged in terms of identity and political strategy. On the one hand, there was the Latino Institute, a middle-class organization that promoted ethnic identity. They disagreed with the militant tactics of the Spanish Coalition for Jobs, an Alinsky-style organization. Both organizations hoped to improve the lives of the Latino population, but the former was considered to be more sophisticated because they had relationships with power brokers, whereas the latter was essentially a grassroots effort among the working class (Padilla, 1985). As Chicago and other large gateway cities saw an increased Latin population, smaller mid-sized cities also became attractive to Latins.

Regarding Milwaukee, a recent report by Marc Levine (2016) at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, found that “without the surge in Latino population since 1990, the city’s population would have declined by over 16 percent between 1990 and 2014 (p. 17). In the city of Detroit, the loss of manufacturing jobs and the closure of automobile plants in the 1970s led to a decrease in Detroit’s population, but the increase of Latinos has led to a resurgence (Davis, 2000). To better understand the migration and settlement patterns of Milwaukee, it is important to understand the shifting labor needs of Midwestern industries, and the role of Chicago as a gateway city to the Midwest.

Marc Rodriguez, in the *Tejano Diaspora: Mexican Americanism and Ethnic-Politics in Texas and Wisconsin*, provides evidence of the connections of male leadership in San Antonio and Milwaukee. His scholarship highlights the opportunities and challenges of the transnational migration between the Southwest and Midwest in the farmworker movement. As *Tejanos* (Texans) relocated to Milwaukee, creating civil service organizations, media outlets, and social venues, they began encouraging a larger diaspora of Latinos in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin (Rodriguez M., 2011; Rodriguez, J., 2006). This scholarship of valuable histories about the migration patterns focuses primarily on the male perspective. The focus on men could be because they were the primary wage earners, could also be because evidence in newspapers, gatherings, or protests highlighted the men who were visibly present.

The diverse landscape of Latin communities has raised new questions about the intersections of the role of Latinos, urban planning, and American cities. An increasing amount of scholarship in urban studies is examining the Latino communities, from the *barrios* (slang for neighborhoods) of Los Angeles (Diaz, 2005) to the urban transformation and racial politics in Nashville, Tennessee (Winders, 2012). It will be exciting to read future research about how Latinas might be similar or different in southern cities versus northern cities, like Milwaukee.

As diversity increases in cities, small towns, and rural areas, all of these communities from the Southwest, Northeast, and Midwest embodied places and spaces where Latinos in urban, suburban and rural areas are redefining communities socially, geographically, and politically. The next section provides a look at the construction of masculine and feminine identities, and the intersections with urban development in Latin neighborhoods.

### **Gender Identities in Latina/o Communities and The Contributions of Latinas**

A great deal of diversity exists within Latina/o communities, and there is scholarship examining how Latin ethnic identity consciousness is formed from multiple perspectives, and by both ethnicity, and gender (Oboler, 1995; Padilla, F. 1985). Within that Latin identity, differences have arisen between members, and gradually gender has become a defining issue. Some of those breaks within the Latin Diaspora exist because of differences between masculine and feminine ideologies. According to Levant & Pollack, a masculine ideology is a socially constructed nature of masculinity (1995). Janet Spence's (1993) research found that young boys and men in families learn cultural norms and expectations from their families and society and this learned behavior is how they process information and interact in everyday life environments. The gender socialization of girls and women in the Latino culture results in stereotypical feminine behaviors of household duties, helping out with cooking and cleaning, valuing of appearance by dressing a certain way – (dresses, earrings, jewelry, high-heels and other pretty stuff) and being submissive to and dependent on the male figure in the house (Comas-Diaz, 1987). Understanding the social construction of masculine and feminine identities helps us understand another dimension within the Latin Diaspora.

As Latina women have been involved in a number of community building activities, these women learned to balance in managing their home life along with building and improving communities in cities and small towns across the U.S. While there is a growing literature on Latina women and their contributions to community building, this work is uneven.

Focusing on oral histories of Latinas in the United States, Vicki L. Ruiz and Virginia Sánchez Korrol authored *Latinas in the United States: A Historical Encyclopedia* (2006). This extensive encyclopedia provides stories of 230 women, and their impacts in towns and cities across the U.S. While the encyclopedia is an ambitious contribution of women from all regions, the Latinas in the Midwest region are from Chicago-Illinois, Detroit-Michigan and Gary-Indiana. Yet despite the scope of this work, Milwaukee garnered only a single mention: It includes the story of one woman, Maria Varela who graduated from Alverno College in Milwaukee, and left to continue a career in union organizing efforts in California, New York and Alabama (Ruiz & Sánchez Korrol, 2006, p.787). Their goal of providing the untold stories in the different regions of the U.S. was formidable and admirable, but once again Latina perspectives from Milwaukee or Wisconsin continue to be invisible in the national landscape of Latinas in the United States.

In the past couple of years, greater attention is being given to the contributions of Latina experiences, voices, and political involvement in Milwaukee and throughout Wisconsin. Teresa Delgadillo's scholarship, *Latina Lives in Milwaukee* (2016), compiles the oral histories of eleven Latinas recalling their family history, work trajectories, and community life in the past 40 years. These interviews showcase how Latinas collaborated and supported each other, despite their different ethnicities, citizenship status, and occupations. The strength of Teresa Delgadillo's scholarship is that she allows women to tell their stories about triumph, but also includes the many challenges and adversity they overcame. While each story is an important contribution, Delgadillo's contributions focus on a select group of women, and how they raised children, worked on social justice issues, obtained higher education, and ultimately served as role models in the Latina community. An upcoming publication, *Somos Latinas: Voices of Wisconsin Latina Activists* by Andrea-Teresa Arenas and Eloisa Gómez provides the stories of 25 activists throughout Wisconsin (2018). My scholarship adds to that by Delgadillo, Arenas, and Gómez, because I provide an in-depth

analysis of social, political, and economic factors that Latinas overcame in Wisconsin. Additionally, I examine the role of a non-Latina who greatly influenced activism efforts in Milwaukee, and how together this sisterhood created long-lasting policy changes in Milwaukee. All of these recent contributions re-conceptualize the history of Milwaukee's Latino community and enrich our understanding by including the contributions of Latinas in community-building efforts.

### **Organizing community and community organizing: urban and gendered experiences**

Community organizing is a process that brings people together, seeking to change the relations between those in power and the powerless. In the U.S., social activism took center stage after World War II when organizations like the IAF strove to increase their membership base by involving churches, labor unions, nonprofit organizations, and individuals and families. Early efforts to change policy and practice resulted in federal programs aimed at improving the lives of individuals, such as the Great Society, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and the War on Poverty.

To many in the field of community organizing, Saul Alinsky is considered to be the “father” of organizing. His theory of establishing an organization of organizations was the only way to address powerful institutions that marginalized and disenfranchised working and lower-class communities (Alinsky, 2010). The creation of the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) would become the cornerstone of future community organizing networks over the next fifty years. Alinsky believed in five basic tenets: A distinction between volunteers and leaders (unpaid), and professional staff (paid). A distinguishing practice of the leader is building power to change outcomes, whereas the organizer is helping the leader find power. Second, Alinsky believed in the power of numbers, and that major institutions would alter their power relations if they were engaged with a powerful organization. Thirdly, issues should be focused and targeted to one person in authority. Fourth, any campaign would target the concerns of local residents and focus on winning campaigns. Finally, the role of the organizer was a life-long commitment, work that would be done at all hours of the day,



every day of the week (Alinsky, 2010 ). It is important to know Alinsky's five basic principles of community organizing , to see how these principles would be changed by new networks, and by other male and female organizers in future decades.

The work of Aaron Schutz and Mike Miller in *People Power* explores the relationship of five important colleagues of Saul Alinsky, and how each one of them worked closely with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) (2015). The IAF was built on a model of addressing systemic poverty, and aligning different organizations (churches, labor unions, and service industries) to address an issue. Using articles, unpublished papers, and interviews, Schutz and Miller share the contributions of Alinsky's colleagues: Nicholas von Hoffman, Fred Ross, Tom Gaudette, Dick Harmon, and Ed Chambers (Schutz & Miller, 2015).

Fred Ross created a new methodology of organizing communities with the "house meeting model." The result was engaging and building relationships with individuals, their families and networks in a more personal setting (Sen R., 2003; Schutz & Miller, 2015; Schutz & Sandy, 2011). Community Service Organization (CSO) in Los Angeles arose from this and organized against urban renewal, job discrimination, police harassment, and other concerns. Ross worked closely with the Mexican American community and knew the importance of finding leadership that could speak to populations being organized. In *America's Social Arsonist – Fred Ross and Grassroots Organizing in the Twentieth Century*, Thompson provided a thorough review of different strategies and tactics for running effective meetings, campaigns and actions (2016). Fred Ross exemplified how men prioritized organizing life over family life. He stated, "You're not working any nine-to-five job any more. You're not working just six days a week. That's the end of family life" (Thompson, 2016, p. 94). This statement of the life of the organizer demonstrates how those who aspired to have a community organizing career could not have a healthy family life. I will say more about this early belief that community organizing could not be compatible with raising children or having a partner.

This highlights a distinct difference between men and women; many women did not have the luxury or option to end their family responsibilities.

Alongside with Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers (UFW) organization, fought for better wages and working conditions for migrant farm workers. This farmworker movement, from Texas to Wisconsin, focused on the rights and privileges of Latin workers in agricultural fields. The mobilization efforts of Cesar Chavez to gain contracts with organized labor affected consumers throughout the nation when he asked consumers to boycott the purchase of lettuce and grapes. This increased ethnic identity and consciousness led to other organizing campaigns throughout the U.S. The strategies for and tactics of organizing farmworkers in the Southwest would be used by organizers throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Indiana (Rodriguez M., 2011; Valdés, 2005; Alvarado & Alvarado, 2012; Millard et. al., 2004). By 1970, the work of Cesar Chavez, Dolores Huerta, and other Spanish-speaking organizers led to the creation of the National Farm Workers Association (NFWA), and this organization forced the agricultural industry to accept union contracts for their workers. By the early 1970s, some organizers sought to further increase their base through the involvement of religious institutions, and these individuals promoted faith-based organizing.

In the 1970s, People Improving Communities through Organizing (PICO) was created under the leadership of Fr. John Baumann, who believed the church could be the building block for an organization of organizations (Schutz & Miller, 2016; Sen, R., 2003; Warren, 2001). Another network organized by churches, the Gamaliel Foundation, provides training to new leaders, typically religious men and women, and a support network for women leaders and organizers. Other, non faith-based organizations were created, from the National People's Action to the Association of Community Organizations for Reform (ACORN). The former, begun by Shell Trapp, organized groups of individuals, institutions, and coalition groups, while the latter was founded by Wade

Rathke, sought to create organizations in low and working-class neighborhoods, eventually growing a network of satellite offices in cities across the U.S. The touchpoints of ACORN included media outlets and thus ACORN was able to mobilize and organize on direct action campaigns (Sen, R., 2003; Schutz & Miller, 2016).

Many women who wanted to be engaged in social justice work, and raise a family, rejected some of the original theories of “no family life,” or the militant tactics and strategies of Alinsky-style organizing. As women created a niche in community organizing, they saw the confluence of racism, sexism, and gender. Women’s work was often devalued. Some made assumptions that women lacked sufficient time to dedicate to the demands of community organizing, weighed down by traditional caregiving roles. Others believed women simply lacked skills. Yet from this supposed weakness came the impetus for important change. The Midwest Academy was formed in the early 1970s after a group of women fought for changes in childcare licensing. The childcare campaign addressed issues for working class women, and they quickly realized the gaps in the organizing profession. Thus, the Midwest Academy was formed and provided some of the first organizing training for women, promoting values, building a base of power, and hoping to change the relationship of power (Bobo, Kendall & Max, 2001; Sen, R., 2003; Schutz & Miller, 2016). The landscape of community organizing was no longer only led by membership organizations connected by labor or faith-based organizations, a shift in identity politics and more organizing groups were created led by specific groups appeared.

In the 1980s and 1990s, other organizations emerged that challenged the IAF model from the perspectives of people of color and youth. During the 1990s and 2000s, youth-led or youth-focused community-based organizations emerged across the country. One organization, the Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO) engaged young people (18-24 years of age) to build leaders, and organize campaigns focused on environmental justice, educational reform, youth services,

criminal justice system reform, and a number of other issues. The sophistication of youth-led organizations has created national, statewide, and local efforts in every state of the U.S. Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing (FCYO) coordinates grantmaking and capacity building, infrastructure development, training modules, up-to-date research, and effective communication strategies. FYCO, similar to other youth-led organizations, use the power of the internet to communicate with youth with social media and webinars (Ginwright, Shawn, & Noguera, 2006; Delgado & Staples, 2007). Building on the idea of identity politics, and the rise of multi-culturalism, community organizing groups can now be found for every political affiliation, and any issue-oriented group seeking change.

Several organizations or campaigns in the Midwest have been led by women of color. The women of Wentworth Gardens in Chicago opposed the construction of the White Sox stadium, and faced resentment for being against development and progress, but they were grounded in the community and understood the need to preserve affordable housing (Feldman, 2004; Feldman, Stall & Wright, 1998). Their organizing campaign in the Chicagoland area drew on the experiences of women who understood the power of building relationships, supporting each other in social gatherings, and providing help raising children, running errands, and sharing information about programs and services. Feldman's research shows how women of color embraced a community organizing model built on relationships and connection.

In Milwaukee, welfare mothers came together because they faced discrimination, humiliation, and degrading experiences with the Welfare Department. These experiences led to marches to Madison for the rights of poor people (Howard Tarantino & Becker, 1972; Jones, 2009; Salas & Giffey, 1998). In *Welfare Mothers Speak Out*, women are seen advocating for the growing number of poor people, mostly women and children, who needed basic support for food, clothing, and shelter (Howard Tarantino & Becker, 1972). The Milwaukee County Welfare Rights

Organization is part of the National Welfare Rights Organization (NRWO) that challenged the federal government to provide more resources for women and children. This scholarship on welfare rights shows how Latinos, African Americans, and Native Americans joined a coalition to address the needs of the marginalized. It also provides an example of how this campaign, which addressed the basic needs of families, was supported by male organizers in the community. In my research on the 1970s in Milwaukee, I found that both men and women were involved in the fight against oppressive actions of the welfare system.

Also, in Milwaukee, Native American mothers fought for educational reform efforts for their children. Women were instrumental in the creation of the Indian Community School in Milwaukee (Krouse, 2003). In Chicago, the Native American population increased after World War II, partially due to the Federal Relocation program. Indian women recognized the growing need for social services; “women gathered, shared and listened” to community members (Straus & Valentino, 2003). While Native American women served in leadership roles within their families or clans, they then began to take on public leadership roles. The Native American women of Chicago created and operated several nonprofit organizations promoting: Culture and language, economic workforce and leadership development programs (Wright, 2009).

The chapters in the *Keeping the Campfires Going* (Krouse & Howard, 2003) illustrate a gendered difference, a leadership style that is particular to Native women. Historically, in most indigenous communities, women are treated as equals. In some tribes, Clan Mothers talk, decide and nominate the men who will be in charge. Indigenous and activist agendas in major cities in the U.S. and Canada can be attributed to Native American women. From the creation of the American Indian Center in Chicago, to the organizing indigenous market venues in Vancouver, Canada or Anchorage, Alaska, or the Seattle Indian Center, women are the ones in leadership positions (Krouse & Howard,

2003). They encountered racism, social and economic inequality, and oppression. Yet these barriers did not stop them from creating Indian organizations in cities throughout the U. S.

### **Gender in Community Organizing**

Analysis by Susan Stall and Randy Stoecker takes up the precise question of the role of gender in community organizing and organizing community. They identify a woman-centered model of organizing with less focus on the organizer and leaders, and more on relationship building. The major difference, they argue, from an “Alinsky type model, organizing for power” is that the “women-centered model...focuses on organizing relationships to build community” (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). Stall and Stoecker agree with other scholars who believe that when women advocate and organize for members in the community, they often seem to expand the boundaries of mothering (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997; Collins, 1998; Stall & Stoecker, 2005).

My research shows that a women-centered model resonated with Latina women in Milwaukee. First and foremost, they wanted to be a part of community engagement, and they did this by building relationships in their networks of neighborhoods, churches, and schools. Latina women wanted to be engaged civically and participate in leadership opportunities. Stall and Stoecker reorient the discussion of women taking personal issues to the public arena. More importantly, they examine how women build consensus, mobilize actions, and encourage others to act. Mobilizing actions are building campaigns to address an issue, the event has meaning, and the organizing groups talks about solutions and mobilization efforts. In contrast, encouraging others to act means knowing your community and trying to motivate people to act on their self-interest. A critical stumbling block to women’s civic engagement has been long-held expectations of their roles as family caregivers. Women have often been expected to continue with their home responsibilities in tandem with their community work. Obviously, this is a major difference from the Alinsky-type model where organizing is first and comes before family (Alinsky, 1946; Thompson, G., 2016).

Other scholars find similar patterns in gender and organizing, with respect not only to the gendering of activist work, but also to the issues taken up. Nancy Naples investigates how women working in low-income communities, where gender, race-ethnicity, and class contribute to the development of ‘activist mothering’ (1992) or ‘just what needed to be done’ (1991). A series of case studies examines how women-centered organizing campaigns attempted to change policies and practices related to schooling for African Americans, establish a Korean women’s hotline, or address domestic violence advocacy (Parkison Stern, 1998; Park, 1998; Krauss, 1998; Feldman et. al., 1998). Although, Nancy Naples provides detailed research that intersects race, class and gender, a more thorough analysis of the impact with the multiple axis and identities is missing from each narrative. Closer analysis of the multiple identities of women and oppressive situations could have been outlined to a greater degree.

This scholarship on feminist activism throughout different regions demonstrates the importance of women taking action and creating change. Each case study provides a fuller understanding of the political battles of fighting for the rights of poor people. In many ways, the social, economic, and political dynamics in other cities have been similar to those in Milwaukee. However, little research explicitly tackles how Latina community activism in a mid-sized, urban, Midwestern city has addressed multiple issues and policy changes. Furthermore, to better understand the complex context of racial and ethnic identities, economic and social inequalities, and other power differentials, I turn to critical race theory, and the related literatures on LatCrit and intersectionality.

### **Critical Race Theory, LatCrit, and Intersectionality**

In the wake of the Civil Rights movement’s failure to achieve full racial equality and justice in the U.S., Critical Race Theory developed from legal studies. In the collection of writing in *Critical Race Theory – The Key Writings that Formed the Movement*, the theme to understand: How white

supremacy and the control of people of color is done under the “the rule of law” and “equal protection” and scholars who want to change the status quo (Crenshaw, Gotanda, Peller, & Thomas, 1995, p. xiii).

### **Critical Race Theory**

Critical Race Theory (CRT), examines how race, racism, and power structures have been put into place in the United States. How does racialization and citizenship interact with Milwaukee being the most segregated city in the nation? The way individuals perceive each other, whether you are a part of the majority society or of minority groups, is tied to race. There is a perception that people who are non-white are substandard intellectually and morally. The racialization process for Latinos is complex because of the great range of phenotypes; some have “light skin” or “dark skin”, blue or brown eyes, and curly or straight hair. Within Latino communities it is widely known that if you have light skin you will have access and certain privileges in everyday encounters. The more educated you are, the more opportunities you might acquire to climb social ladders. Having some ‘whiteness’ affords more and better opportunities for groups of people.

CRT emerged from scholars who examined race, racism, and power. CRT provides the underpinning for much of my work. Consider that the Latin community is so often asked to define their ethnicity, nationality, or preferred language. How is it non-white people do not always ask a white person: Are you German, English, or Polish? Why must non-whites answer this question in regular conversations? It has become common-place and acceptable for white communities to exercise the power of their whiteness and question or verify the identities of non-whites. Race is always in play in the classroom, at school, work, politics, etc....it is everywhere. For many white people, it is difficult for them to identify “white” as a race, and they are oblivious to the concepts of cultural identity and the privileges that go along with being white (Frankenberg, 1993; Rothenberg, 2005; Dalton, 1995). Nevertheless, some white Americans identify with the “founding fathers” that



created a racialized structure with laws and legitimacy through state government. These privileged positions allowed for greater social mobility, greater superiority within their ethnic group and created class divisions. Closer inspection of race and racism in U.S. led to theories on whiteness and the privileges of whiteness. Ruth Frankenberg's study of the social construction of whiteness analyzes how some people have "structural advantage, of race privilege...(A) place in which white people look at ourselves, at others, and at society and lastly referring to a set of practices that are usually unmarked or unnamed" (Frankenberg, 1993, pp. 1-2).

While Frankenberg's study of whiteness and women led to greater understanding of privileges within the white community, it also provided new ways of exploring and analyzing categories related to race, gender, and class. A new theory of going "beyond white privilege" examines how settler colonial societies continue to operate with racial hierarchies creating an enduring practice of white supremacy in social, political and economic areas (Bonds & Inwood, 2016). Settler colonialism and white supremacy theories can shift dialogues to understand how cities are planned, or not planned, and the community organizer's role in building a more equitable society. Furthermore, research on racial economies shows how economic development is always racialized. The activists I interviewed faced similarly racialized processes of economic development.

### **LatCrit theory**

LatCrit theory builds on CRT to understand the Latin experience of power relations, including how language, citizenship, ethnicity, culture, and gender all shape the identity of Latin people, and how Latin people resist such power relations. Felix Padilla states that the concept of Latino/a-ethnic consciousness represents a "collective-generated behavior which transcends the boundaries of the individual national and cultural identities" (Padilla, 1985, p. 61). Specifically, a person who wants to be identified as "Latin" consciously rejects having to differentiate about their race, class, nationality, linguistic ability, or political affiliation. It is the notion that you identify with

two or more Spanish speaking groups in the United States to bolster political activism, educational reform, youth and civil rights efforts. As Latin neighborhoods developed in cities and regions across the country, many activists noticed that the Latin community was missing from difficult dialogues in working and lower income communities, and policies, and practices were being carried out solely to answer a Black-White paradigm (Perea, 1997; Espinoza & Harris, 1997). The question of race and Hispanics is a continuing debate with no clear distinction of how to understand racial construction with a bifurcated group.(Rodríguez, 2000).

The range of Latin opinion about race and ethnicity can be linked to ideas of class mobility. There are some who understand and recognize that the power of identifying as white Hispanic could offer more upward mobility. Some LatCrit scholars examine the multiplicity of Latinx<sup>2</sup> identities in relation to community, collaboration, and negotiation of power and privilege. From the nomenclature of Hispanic, Latino/a, Latinx, to Lesbian Latina, or white Latina; these are only some of the identities within the Latino diaspora. The multiple identities for Latinos about gender, race, ethnicity, language ability, sexuality, and citizenship allow individuals to be included, or excluded, from community and culture (Espinoza, 2011). Berta Esperanza Hernández-Truyol (1994) writes about how the multiple identities with Latinos allow them to crossover into multiple conversations, places and spaces, where Latinos can be a conduit for partnerships or collaboration. Clara Rodríguez (2000) builds on the question of identities but examines how Latino/as have tremendous fluidity in how they define themselves racially. Some knowingly will be a white-Latin because of benefits associated with being white, some are not Black, and they do not want to be in the “other” category. In *A Critical Reader – The Latino/a Condition* (Delgado & Stefancic, 2011), scholars discuss how the

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term Latinx referencing more recent scholarship in the last ten years. The term Latinx is gaining popularity with younger generations of Latinos.

legal system treats Latinos, the impact of assimilation on second and third generations, and issues about language, culture, sexuality, and schisms within the Latin Diaspora.

The ‘other Latino’ could be a person who does not identify with being white and wants to claim the mixed heritage of possibly being mixed or ‘*trigueño*.’ In some Latin American countries, the identity of some people within a specific nationality could be classified as ‘*trigueño*’—being a mixture but some having dark tones, possibly with some indigenous heritage. Ethnicity along with racial identity privileged those who identified as white Latino versus others who identified as Black Latino (Sanchez, 1995). These privileged positions allowed for greater social mobility, greater superiority within their ethnic group and created class divisions. Supporting this argument is Eduardo Bonilla-Sevilla, who notes that high levels of social and spatial segregation “conditions and creates whites’ racial taste, perceptions, feelings, and emotions and their own views on racial matters” (2003, p. 104). The divisions that take place within Latino communities are materialized when white-Latinos want to differentiate themselves from Latinos who are perceived to be of a lower socio-economic status. Yet some Latinos develop a strong Latin ethnic consciousness, hoping to capitalize on the strengths of individuals who have a history of being colonized and standing up for their rights.

The emergence of LatCrit theory responded to the “invisibility of Latinas/os from law, theory, policy and society” (Valdes, F., 1997). The recognition of Latino/a as an ethnic identity led to many subdisciplines within LatCrit studies, including scholarship about race and identity, historical reconstruction of colonial era, media and stereotypes, periods of resistance, the legal system, the civil rights of Latins, racism, sexism, and classism (Delgado & Stefcancic, 2011). Although scholarship exists about areas of resistance in different communities on important issues throughout the U.S., my scholarship will use LatCrit to understand and examine community organizing in Milwaukee’s Latin community.

My research found that Latina activists developed a specific Latina ethnic consciousness in response to discrimination and poverty in Milwaukee's Latino community and were motivated into social action. Latinas understood that to have any impact, both Latinas and non-Latinas would have to build a coalition with individuals from other Spanish-speaking groups. As Latinas chartered new paths of resistance, they began to understand how they had distinct issues different than those of African American or white women. Many of the Latinas interviewed in this study talked about the strong family connections, and patriarchal traditions within the Hispanic culture. Not only did Latinas have different cultural upbringings, but when coupled with ethnicity, language, phenotype, educational levels and class – Latinas' experience and interpretation in community organizing has been understudied. Understanding LatCrit theory is the foundation for understanding their motivations for community organizing.

To further understand how women, experience inequality, it is important to draw on intersectionality theory. The next section provides an overview of how intersectionality theory has been developed in political science, sociology, law, health, geography, global studies, sexuality, and education. Given the number of intersections with race, class, gender and ethnicity with community organizing and Latinas, I will be building and adding to the scholarship.

### **Intersectionality theory**

Intersectionality theory begins from the notion that multiple oppressions are not cumulative but place the oppressed at the "intersection" of various oppressions, and that the experience of that social location is unique. Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) developed this theory when she faced challenges showing discrimination against women of color, even though there was a law in place that established criteria for demonstrating discrimination on the bases of race or sex. From this early legal work, other Black feminists examined how such oppressions worked not only through law.

Patricia Collins in *Black Feminist Thought* shows how four interrelated domains of power exist, explicitly the *structural, hegemonic, disciplinary, and interpersonal domains*:

Each domain serves a particular purpose. The structural domain organizes oppression, whereas the disciplinary domain manages it. The hegemonic domain justifies oppression and the interpersonal domain influences everyday lived experiences and the individual consciousness that ensues (Collins, 2000, p. 274).

Thus, not only law, but also health care, education, the criminal justice system (structural), patterns of representation and images (hegemonic), institutions (disciplinary), and everyday lived experience (interpersonal) produce unequal power relations. To analyze how women community organizers worked in the 1970s, and how they were learning to think about power and social change, these categories are helpful.

There has been growing use of this theorization across disciplines. In *Intersectionality and Beyond* (Grabham, Cooper, Krishnadas, & Herman, 2009), a collection of studies is included to acknowledge the relations of inequity, such as gender, race, and sexuality. Second, they outline how state agencies and the courts perpetuate a dominance and hierarchy based on white privilege. Finally, the research of case studies with the intersections of law, geographies of place, provide frameworks of organizing campaigns, specifically, sexual violence and law in Yugoslavia and Rwanda (Buss, 2009); indigenous rights of women in Canada (Williams, 2009); minority politics in Korea (Kim, 2009); and gender relations in Ireland (Rooney, 2009). All of these are important contributions from international perspectives with law and the politics of location (Grabham & et.al, 2009).

From a sociological perspective, Leslie McCall states "...intersectionality the most important theoretical contribution that women's studies, in conjunction with related fields, has made so far" (McCall, 2005, p. 1771). McCall focuses on three different approaches of understanding intersectionality in social life are described as: *Anticategorical complexity*, *intercategorical complexity*, and

*intracategorical complexity*. The first one, deconstructs any type of categories, in some ways, simplifying the subjects or structures thus producing inequalities. Of the three approaches presented by McCall (2005), the *intracategorical complexity* approach seems to be the best approach to understand the position of Latina women. Exploring how Latinas interpret their experiences in relation to religion, neighborhood, and other aspects of their lives that are not “categories.” Within the pan-Latino diaspora of Latinas, there is a range of diversity and difference within the group, including language abilities of speaking Spanish or English, citizenship status, and others which may be contest at different points in time (Dill, 2002; McCall, 2005). Studying “intercategorical complexity, requires that scholars provisionally adopt existing analytical categories to document relationship of inequality among social groups and changing configurations of inequality along multiple and conflicting dimensions (McCall, 2005, p. 1773).

Drawing upon feminist scholars from different disciplines, Kathy Davis recognizes that the blurriness of intersectional theory is what makes it one of the most attractive and appealing concepts of postmodern feminist theory (Davis, 2008). Specifically, Davis explores how the differences between how scholars from the social sciences (Zinn & Thornton Dill, 1993; hooks, 1983), law (Crenshaw, 1991), queer studies (Butler, 1989), and gender (Anthias & Yuval-Davis, 1983) all contribute to and build the field on intersectional studies.

With respect to issues that community organizers tend to work on, research on health disparities, and on discrimination practices against Latin, Asian, Black, and Native American groups have shown that policies and practices contribute to unhealthy outcomes. A combination of sentiments in structural institutions, lack of cultural competence, inability to speak English, or lack of citizenship, could all be inequality factors with health outcomes (Viruell-Fuentes, Miranda & Abdulraim, 2012; Bowleg, 2012). These studies were helpful in examining how the State of Wisconsin, or the City of Milwaukee, lacked policies that could address issues in low or working-

class neighborhoods in Milwaukee. From domestic violence, to free lunch programs, or translation of services in hospitals and clinics, it was useful to see how other communities resolved concerns for families and children.

In educational research, scholars using intersectionality have examined the domination of whiteness in higher education and the need to change policies and practices in all disciplines (Peake & Kobayashi, 2002; Pulido, 2002; Núñez, 2011). Macias and Stephens (2017) not only look at race and gender impacts in educational careers, but they examine how diverse faculty, teachers, or educational leaders face barriers with pay and leadership opportunities. Another related theory to educational research and intersectionality that is closely related, is the methodology of storytelling from a LatCrit perspective. The storytelling method is a technique that can be used in any academic discipline.

In many ways, community organizing efforts have embodied an intersectional approach in the way some activists have challenged the original theory put forward by Saul Alinsky and developed different models over time. Over the past fifty years, as different groups emerged working on issues of inequity and promoting social justice, new perspectives and new approaches were created. From the community organizing literature, research on migrant workers – who live at the intersection of immigrant status, having low-wage and seasonal work, and being racialized - working on equitable pay and better working conditions, called for a new lens of race, class, ethnicity, and citizenship. As educational reform efforts happened throughout the different regions of the U.S., new viewpoints from migrant worker parents, immigrants, and U.S. born Latinos were raised. As Latin communities developed neighborhoods, hoping to build the community, Latinas realized gender differences between multiple identities within the pan-Latino diaspora, and in the non-Latin community. Today, the trend of intersectionality and community organizing is the field of identity politics. Different groups, such as Black Lives Matter, Blue Lives Matter, Women's

March, and Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES), organize social justice campaigns based on their specific axes of interests.

## **Conclusion**

My scholarship on Latina activism in Milwaukee provides analysis of gender, ethnicity, class and racial identity in one of the most racialized and segregated cities in the U.S. (Levine, 2016). My research examines contributions of Latinas in Milwaukee during the 1970s and 1980s, and their understanding of their activism. This provides a new perspective on the intersectionality of ethnicity, gender, class and race in a Midwestern city in the Great Lakes Region. The literatures discussed above have been useful in helping me understand the complex histories of Latins relocating into racialized spaces; how they became empowered to stand up for themselves and their families; and how women's gendered community organizing contributed to their success in Milwaukee.

This research bridges how individuals from Spanish- speaking backgrounds developed ethnic identities by claiming and strengthening their own sense or importance of their national origin and creating a pan-Latino diaspora. At times, the differences of class, gender, or ethnicity impacted community organizing efforts and they clashed on the directions of their campaigns. In other incidences, the similarity in language, culture, and traditions encouraged individuals to build coalitions or engage in dialogues. In Milwaukee, a considerable amount of the activism literature focused on the work of Latinos, but now more scholarship is realizing the contributions of Latinas.

The second component of my research describes how the interethnic and interracial relations in Milwaukee highlighted the disparities and marginalization of Latin newcomers. The growing Latin population raised the visibility of a new outsider race, ethnicity, and class that did not fit the Black-White binary paradigm. Latinas in Milwaukee were influenced by one particular non-Latina woman, Mary Anne McNulty who though outside the Latin community was also not Polish,



and thus an outsider, who advocated for working-class, non-white and white families. Latinas listened and learned from each other, building relationships and extending the scope of the family into the community.

The gendered experiences of Latinas, and non-Latinas, in organizing the community resonated among these women. Often women related to each other because they experienced the same everyday practices in discourses within family, community organizing circles, and the broader community. These women embraced qualities and values that did not jeopardize or diminish their commitment to social justice work.

Finally, many women interviewed understood how they were not limited to analyzing any single situation or experience from a race-only, gender-only, ethnicity-only, or class-only lens. Often it was their experiences and identifications of the multiple axes that strengthened and built a cadre of women to improve the community.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

Opening a cardboard box in the home of my recently passed mentor, Mary Anne McNulty, I found a quarter-page, card-stock note (Figure 3.1):

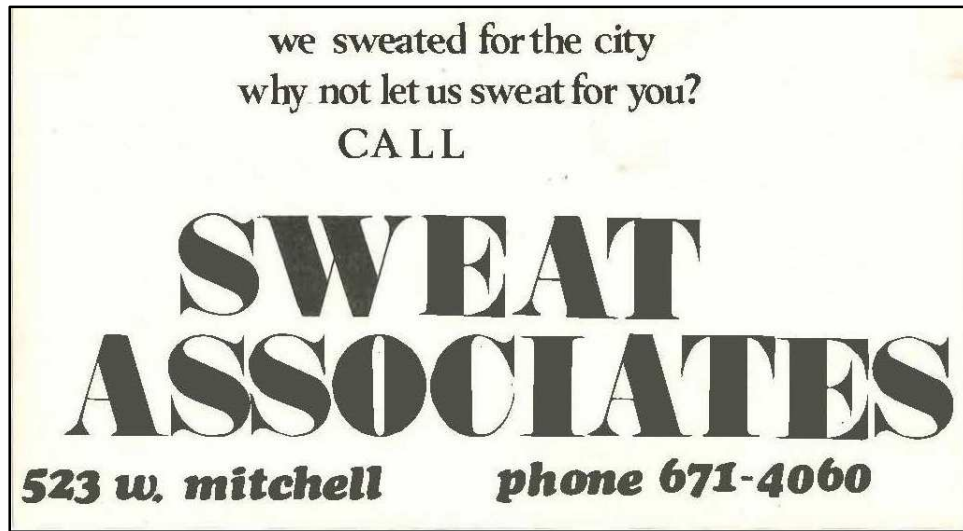


Figure 3.1 Promotional Card (McNulty M. A., Miscellaneous papers, n.d.).

I was invited to Mary Anne's home, near 3<sup>rd</sup> and Lapham streets in Milwaukee. Her family told me I could choose a few items to keep Mary Anne's legacy alive. Former Common Council member Mary Anne McNulty, a friend and mentor, passed away in November 2009, a month after her cancer diagnosis (Umhoefer, 2009). Looking around the small cottage home, I saw some boxes, and the above note card was the first item I read. I asked the family if I could keep the boxes. Her family asked her closest friends to retrieve any mementos from her house, and I kept three boxes of papers. I remember hearing that whatever was not taken by family or friends, would be thrown out or given to Goodwill Industries. This somber invitation to Mary Anne's house led me to learn about her activism in Milwaukee's Latino community, and how she galvanized other Latinas in building Milwaukee's Latin community. My interest in preserving Mary Anne's boxes was the beginning of my comprehensive portrait of Latinas involved in community organizing during the

1970s and 1980s in Milwaukee. My initial exposure to archival materials about Latinas in Milwaukee was spontaneous. I used qualitative methods to collect evidence, seek answers to questions, and learn about new perspectives.

In the 1990s, I worked for two Milwaukee community-organizing institutions, *Esperanza Unida*<sup>3</sup>, and then Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope (MICAH). Little did I know at the time that those experiences would later shape my research on Latinas and other women in community organizing in Milwaukee in the 1970s and 1980s. In this chapter, I set out how my qualitative research methodology, especially in-depth interviews and archival research, was shaped by my positionality as a Latina and as a former community organizer. First and foremost, in this chapter, I share my exposure to community organizing efforts in Milwaukee, and how that background informed my research. My experience, for example, affected my choice of research questions, allowed me to identify interview participants from my community involvement, and helped me craft and design the semi-structured interview questions that would draw out the experiences in community organizing of others.

Second, I detail my research methods, in-depth interviewing and archival research, and how these two methods complement each other to fill in the substantial gaps in the current literature – the history of Latinas in Milwaukee, the work of Latinas in urban community organizing, and the strategies Latinas and other women organizers used to overcome the challenges they faced. I chose the qualitative research method of open-ended interviews because it was important to engage with Latina women who may not otherwise have shared their perspectives and thoughts about the work

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<sup>3</sup> Esperanza Unida, a workforce development agency located on 14<sup>th</sup> and National from 1971 to 2017, helped unemployed and injured workers with unemployment compensation hearings. Esperanza Unida staff were instrumental in the preservation of the 611 National Building, an iconic structure that has the mural of peace on the south façade. Many individuals attribute the revitalization of the near south side, especially the Walker's Point community to the efforts of Richard Oulahan, a founding director of the agency.

they were intimately involved in as younger adults. Many of the Latinas engaged in storytelling during the interviews; they were constructing the meanings of their past experiences. It was in the analysis of these rich narratives that I was able to glean powerful and important interpretations from each of them.

The Mary Anne McNulty Collection includes many primary sources including documents, photographs, posters, letters, and Mary Anne McNulty's personal log from the early 1970s. These materials helped me contextualize the social, economic, and political landscape of the 1970s-1980s in Milwaukee's Latino community. After organizing and reviewing the McNulty collection, I realized further research needed to take place at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Marquette University, and the Milwaukee County History Society. Yet examining collections of the Latino-based agencies, and personal records of male Latino activists, at each of the institutions confirmed my intuition. Not much existed in the archives about Latina activism in Milwaukee. My archival research confirmed the need for the interviews.

Lastly in this chapter, I reflect on how intersectionality theory has informed my research and analysis. Not only did my experience as a community activist and positionality as Latina shape my research (including my interpretation), but intersectionality theory has increased my awareness that my research participants' stories and knowledge should be added to the archives of what we know about Milwaukee activism. The following three sections provide a comprehensive overview of the qualitative research, and how my positionality in terms of my personal upbringing, professional career, ethnicity, citizenship status, language ability, and gender all fit into the background of understanding of how a single individual has multiple points of intersections.

### **Positionality in Community Organizing via Labor and Faith Based Organizations**

During my last undergraduate year at UWM in 1991, I volunteered at *Esperanza Unida* (United Hope), a non-profit organization assisting Latino workers with unemployment

compensation hearings, located in Milwaukee's Latino community on 14<sup>th</sup> and National Avenue. Given my interests in economics and labor, and my ability to speak Spanish, Richard Oulahan<sup>4</sup> (then the Executive Director) invited me to apply for work in the advocacy for injured workers. At *Esperanza Unida*, I learned about the plight of injured Latino workers who had limited English-speaking abilities. Men and women who worked in the foundries, factories, and tanneries faced unsafe working conditions, and if they were injured on the job, struggled to gain unemployment compensation. My experience at this workforce development agency helped me understand the critical role of this nonprofit organization in helping the underemployed or unemployed.

During my tenure at *Esperanza Unida*, Richard Oulahan was invited to nominate young persons of color between the ages of 18 and 26 years of age to the Center for Third World Organizing (CTWO) – Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program (MAAP). The MAAP program taught the organizing framework of CRAFT: Contact work, Research, Action, Fundraising, and Teamwork. I was accepted into MAAP and for eight weeks, I worked on a labor campaign with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) in Denver, Colorado. There I recruited low-wage custodial and janitorial workers to consider joining the union for better wages, health benefits, and improved working conditions. Working for a local chapter of SEIU within the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO), I grew to better understand how the roles and responsibilities at a local level in Denver, Colorado compared to broader workplace rights with the AFL-CIO.

After graduating CTWO, I was recruited for multiple positions by union and faith-based organizations, including the AFL-CIO, Gamaliel Foundation, and the Pacific Institute for

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<sup>4</sup> Many individuals attribute the revitalization of the near south side, especially the area of Walker's Point community to the efforts of Richard Oulahan, a founding director of the agency.

Community Organization (PICO) Foundation. My personal interest was to remain in Milwaukee, so I became an organizer and joined MICAH. Founded in 1988, MICAH's mission is to train community and faith leaders in building political power while working on social justice issues with people of diverse backgrounds. MICAH seeks to empower individuals to participate in social, political, and economic issues impacting their lives through their faith, predominantly working with churches in the central city. As a local organization, MICAH is part of a national network of grassroots, interfaith, and interracial organization called the Gamaliel Foundation.

Up until 1993, MICAH was a city-wide organization, but in name only. MICAH faced many challenges in recruiting churches on the south side of Milwaukee because of the extreme racial segregation and tensions. These tensions were reminiscent of those connected to the Open Housing marches, desegregation plans in Milwaukee Public Schools, and equal opportunity in employment from the 1960s. The earlier civil rights era in Milwaukee created a distinct Black and White divide. William Julius Wilson's research discusses how the decline of Black urban communities was a "progressive transition from racial inequalities to class inequalities" (Wilson, 2012). The low rates of homeownership, deindustrialization, and White flight led to higher rates of poverty in the Black community. For the first five years of MICAH's existence, most of the work concentrated in Milwaukee's African American community with membership from Baptist, Lutheran, and Catholic denominations. Many individuals living on the south side community of Milwaukee considered MICAH a "north side organization"—code for African American organization—which did not meet the needs of the Polish and Latino community. As the bilingual community organizer, I facilitated the recruitment and alignment of South Side churches to the organization.

In the fall of 1993 during my rookie year at MICAH, I received additional training in community-organizing tactics and strategies focused on working with clergy and church-based

leadership councils. Several key leaders were identified during my tenure at MICA; one was Mary Anne McNulty, and she became a key individual during my early career in community organizing. During my seven-year tenure as a community organizer with MICA, I built a strong mentor-mentee relationship with Mary Anne. With her guidance I worked on education, housing, public safety, drug treatment programs in lieu of prison sentencing, employment, and transportation issues. Overall my experience at MICA laid the groundwork for analysis of policy issues and program analysis. My goal was to complement this work and find work in higher education initiatives. In 1998, I started my current career at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM) facilitating university and community partnerships at the Center for Urban Initiatives and Research and pursuing my graduate studies in Urban Studies.

### **Transition from community organizing to higher education in Milwaukee**

At UWM I was fortunate to join a cadre of people asking the private and public sector, “How can UWM become more relevant in the community?” The notion was part of former Chancellor Nancy Zimpher’s campaign to build partnerships across disciplines while engaging in the community. As staff at the Milwaukee Idea office, I was part of the team striving to make the work of the university relevant in the community (Percy, Zimpher, & Brukardt, 2006). The Milwaukee Idea created several innovative initiatives developed in partnership with the community to address education, health, economic development, the environment, urban design and art. Each of these big ideas required an in-depth history of previous work in the community and at the university. This work created a road map for future objectives for each initiative. In many ways, this type of research and analysis sparked my interest in shifting from being a practitioner in community organizing, to becoming a scholar and researcher in the field of Urban Studies.

The purpose of this dissertation is to call attention to the contributions of Latina women who had direct experience in and knowledge of community- organizing and community- building efforts in the 1970s and 1980s. The questions I will answer are:

1. How did Latinx ethnic identity consciousness, migration and urban social geographies impact community organizing in Milwaukee?
2. How did national identity, gender, class, race, religion, and “outsider status” impact Latina activism in Milwaukee?
3. How did gendered discourses in community organizing shape an emotional closeness or bonds, create tensions, and otherwise shape community organizing in Milwaukee?
4. How can intersectionality inform and complicate analysis of multi-cultural community organizing?

### **Research Design for Studying Latina Activism in Milwaukee**

To answer these questions, I used a combination of qualitative methods for data collection, specifically semi-structured in-depth interviews and archival research (Harris, 2001; Raitz, 2001; Hodder, 2000). The semi-structured questions allowed me to discover the experiences and interpretations of key Latina women in community- organizing and community- building efforts. This method gave me time to spend with participants to understand the complexity and nature of the work. Given the lack of both scholarship and archival materials about Latina activists, interviewing informants was the best option for filling the gap. The best and only way to learn about the motivations, experiences, and interpretations from a diverse group of women was by conducting interviews (Dunn, 2010; Water, 1999; Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981).

To complement the interviews, I conducted archival research at long- standing nonprofit agencies, historical societies, and universities in the Milwaukee area including United Community Center, Spanish Speaking Outreach Institute, United Migrant Opportunity Services, La Causa, Wisconsin Historical Society, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, Marquette University, and the Mary Anne McNulty collection. Archival research in local institutions was imperative to find what information had been collected, by whom, during what time period, and whether there was any archival evidence of the contributions of Latina activists. Sitting at the tables of each institution left



me in disbelief about the lack of scholarship about Latinas, but also provided a motivation and resolve to complete my research. This dearth of information about Latina activism in Milwaukee demonstrates the need for adding to the scholarship on the development of Milwaukee's Latino community. In the next sections I detail the complementary methods of in-depth interviewing and archival research as I used them. The primary and secondary source materials allowed me to incorporate qualitative methods using archival research, discourse analysis and future interviews to triangulate and determine the real picture of events in the early 1970s.

### **Interviews**

First, my selection of interview participants for the research involved a multi-faceted approach. Gleaning names of Latina activists from the personal papers from the McNulty collection resulted in the first five women interviewed. The women ranged in diversity, age, ethnicity, and class backgrounds. Each woman has a unique story, for many they came with one or two parents from Puerto Rico, Central or South America, some families were successful property landowners in their native homeland, some with educational backgrounds, and others came to escape political and economic turmoil in their native homelands. Although the histories of each participant varied greatly, but they all lived in a close-knit neighborhood in the 12<sup>th</sup> district located south of downtown Milwaukee. The remaining 20 participants were identified through a referral method, or "snowball" sampling, and through my own personal connections with Latinas, non-Latinas and some male activists. As a community organizer in the 1990s, I learned about some of the key women from the "glory organizing days in the 60s, 70s and 80s," (Nájera, Reflection, 2015).

To have a comprehensive understanding of the participants, I am providing some general information about key persons mentioned throughout my research. Antonia was born in Puerto Rico came to the U. S. with her mother and siblings, she attended Milwaukee Public Schools faced racism, discrimination during her schooling experience. Raquel, born in the U.S., identified as a

Mexican American, worked as migrant child worker, attended MPS and fought for the rights of migrant farm worker families. Eva, a Mexican American, came from a middle-class background, attended private schooling at elementary and post-secondary level, saw the injustices of Urban Renewal on Milwaukee's westside which motivated her to address issues of housing throughout her lifetime. Paulina, a third generation Mexican American attended private schooling, and was considered to be middle income because of entrepreneurial endeavors of the family. Claudia, identified as Puerto Rican and Mexican because of her parents, relocated to Milwaukee as a child, she identified with both communities and worked her entire life in educational awareness and promotion as a way to escape poverty. Dalia, a Polish American raised in a middle-income family but faced conflicting messages of clash between whites, Latins, and Blacks while she faced her own struggles of paternalism within her own family. Mary Ann, an Irish-American raised in a middle-income family in Chicago, moved to Milwaukee and became socially conscious during the civil rights movement. Eduardo, a Chicano, came to Wisconsin in his 20s fought for the rights of migrant farm workers. Pablo, a Puerto Rican fought for bilingual education reform in the 1970s and 1980s.

During each interview, I asked my subjects if they could recall any other key participants for my research study. Every interview resulted in three to five individuals who might participate in future interviews. Soon the list of referred participants reached nearly fifty individuals, I determined a set of criteria for selection. Participants were selected based on their involvement in community building efforts in Milwaukee during the 1970s and 1980s. I did not select based on the area of issue development or the geographic area. Engaged Latina women who worked in the 1970s with a cross-section of Latinas in Milwaukee's Latino community were prioritized. I expected that based on their activism and various positionalities, these Latinas could provide interpretations and insights about their experiences during the formative years of Milwaukee's Latino community.

To ensure a comprehensive view of perspectives and interpretations, I compiled a short list of community development leaders, public officials (previous and current), city planners, journalists, community organizers, residents, and religious leaders. To capture the two decades of activism, I interviewed a diverse group of men and women from the Latin, African American, Native American and white communities. Of the 25 individuals interviewed, the vast majority, 84%, identified as women, and of that population, 48% identified as Latina.

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Table 3.1. Participant Identification

Identification	Number of Interviewees	Percentage of Sample Population
Latina – Puerto Rican, Mexican American, Central or South American females	12	48%
White females	6	24%
Native American females	2	8%
African American female	1	4%
African American males	2	8%
Latino males	2	8%
<b>Total Participants</b>	<b>25</b>	

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### Procedures

All participants were initially recruited and contacted by phone. During the phone conversation, I provided a brief overview of my research study, and I asked each person if they would be willing to choose a time when I could learn about their insights, experiences, and interpretations of community- organizing activity on Milwaukee’s south side during the 1970s and 1980s. Once the participant understood the purpose of my research, we scheduled a date and location for the semi-structured interview. These conversations took place in a variety of locations. Some participants preferred to meet in their homes, some in a café, and a few preferred a phone interview because of time restrictions. On average, the interviews lasted for 90 minutes. The first

five to ten minutes were general conversations or “catching up” about each other’s personal lives. This initial informal talk aided in free-flowing conversations prior to the interview, because I knew many of them, and it provided an opening for a friendly interview process.

During the consent process, individuals understood that their participation was completely voluntary, the study had minimal risk, and if they wanted to change their mind at any moment, they could withdraw from the research study without any implications to their relationship with the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. All the interviews were recorded, and each participant had the option of anonymity. Pseudonyms were used for all the informants in the study. Five women asked for complete anonymity with no reference of their names in the appendices of the research study (See Appendix E). Furthermore, to understand the interpretations and experiences of Latina activists, I used an open-ended interview questionnaire to learn about the following from each participant: A brief history of their family background, educational history, country of origin, age of social consciousness raising, motivations for organizing, and any challenges or barriers in their community activism efforts. Next, once the process of interviewing and transcriptions, were completed, I looked for common themes across the interviews using grounded theory and discourse analysis.

### **Open-ended ethnographic interviews and power relations**

During each interview, each participant was asked to share a brief story of how their family came to Wisconsin. This open-ended question allowed me to ask follow-up questions, such as, “Can you please share your family history of coming to Wisconsin?” or “How old were you in when you arrived in the U.S.?” A third question I sometimes asked could have been, “What was your first language spoken in the home?” All these questions helped me learn about ethnicity, citizenship status, and family background. A surprising experience during my research, was the number of moments when a seemingly innocuous question about a person’s family history would trigger an

emotional response. Sometimes asking a participant to recall their family history would elicit a memory of a loved one who had passed away, and I would sense and see the person becoming emotional. These delicate moments of being an active listener, sensitive to the respondent's emotions, required finesse and skill to delicately move on to the next question so it did not become a therapy session. In my years of conducting "one-on-ones" as a community organizer, I developed strong listening skills, and I knew how to be disciplined during an interview.

For example, my first interview was the most challenging, because of the participant's emotional response to my question about her family background. Having personal knowledge of the loss of her loved one in recent years, I could see that this question triggered memories. The participant shed a tear and recalled how her loved one was her support system. This first interview reinforced my sense of the vulnerability of each participant, their willingness to inform the greater community, and how their altruistic values were evident years after their community-organizing days. The interviewer must be nimble and flexible, asking one or two follow-up questions to their personal story. If the interviewer continues interviewing with no regard to the participants' emotions, it will appear callous and insensitive. I learned valuable lessons about human interaction, the fragility and courage of individuals who want to participate in research but who do not fully comprehend the potential emotional risk involved in answering historical questions about a time and place in the past. This first interview helped prepare me and reinforced my commitment to handle each interview with caution and care.

In other interviews, some of the informants had the foresight to see how a question could lead to disclosure of personal information, and before they answered the question, they requested the information to be "off the record." As a qualitative researcher, reflection and planning for these moments was useful, and allowed me to practice the transition from "off the record" to returning to the interview (Dunn, 2010; Longhurst, 2003; Rapley, 2001). A challenging aspect I encountered was

the powerful stories of injustices, yet their resilience and determination to keep information to themselves. It felt uncomfortable when the participant asked me to keep a conversation private, not only because of the content, but it felt like the participant effected a shift in power relations. In the following moments, I was responding to their requests and negotiating the best time to return to the interview. The whole process seemed to become very cold and official, because I had to ask, “Is it all right if we continue with the interview and I will resume recording?” (Nájera, Reflection, 2015). One area requiring further research is how emotions are managed by both the participant and the researcher. Both require a level of composure while recalling or listening to powerful narratives. For the storyteller, it could be the first time her voice is being recorded, and for the listener it could be a touching moment to hear the story for a first time. The first few times an “off the record” event happened, I did ask questions but I realized this new unrelated information was not germane to my research. Although very interesting, it was often a distraction. The other dilemma was once I asked more questions, I had confidential information that I could not use because of my own ethical and professional practices.

The power relations during the interview process shifted when participants wanted detailed information “off the record.”<sup>5</sup> The reactions of the participants intensified with some of the questions, resulting in unexpected painful moments for the interviewee when they recalled a specific injustice. The moment the audio recorder was turned off and the participant said, “this is off the record,” the participant’s position shifted, and the participant guided the conversation because they were initiating and sharing personal information. In nearly one-third of the interviews, seven of the

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<sup>5</sup> When participants shared a story “off the record,” I felt compelled to turn off the audio recorder. It was uncomfortable for many reasons, not knowing what information they would share and not knowing how to transition back to the interview. After listening to confidential information, I had to be disciplined about recording the remainder of the interview.

participants shared personal thoughts and information by going “off the record.” As a researcher, I had to quickly respond to their wishes. I always told them that I would turn off the recording device. I did not want to mistakenly record private information. Many questions raced through my head and I could not recall literature about the internal negotiations you encounter when the interviewee changes the power dynamics during the interview.

Linda McDowell has written about the need for researchers to recognize and account for our own positions in the interview process, raising questions about ethical issues during the interview process (Elwood & Martin, 2000). McDowell argues that gender matters in the interview. I whole-heartedly agree because often Latinas who were raised during the pre-feminist movement in the 1970s had not shared their thoughts, interpretations, or experiences until I questioned them (McDowell, 1992). For some, they became teary-eyed recalling when they recalled all their activity and realized, in that moment, their contributions to Milwaukee’s Latino community. Nicole stated:

I never thought of my work as community development, but now that I am talking to you, I am thinking of my work as community development (Nicole, Interview, 2015).

Thinking about Elwood and Martin, I asked, “Did gender play a role in the participant’s decision to go “off the record (Elwood & Martin, 2000)?” Building on the scholarship of McDowell, I questioned how my gender and positionality in the community—former organizer, bilingual, mother, daughter of immigrants, and employed outside of the home played a role in the interview. It is interesting to note that the researcher generates meanings and interpretations because of specific events in the interview (Herod, 1993). Other questions arose concerning my role as a researcher: Why did the participant feel compelled to share “off record” comments? Did the respondent want me to ask questions? How much of this unusable information would cloud my judgement? I attributed these moments of sharing to my establishment of a high level of trust, and of being an “insider,” to

individuals and organization in Milwaukee's Latino community; however, it also blurred the boundaries between researcher and friend (Sheftel & Zembrzyckis, 2013).

To combat the messiness of open-ended interviews one must be prepared, professional, and flexible in the situations where you have gained and built a level of trust with the participant. I wanted to know more detailed information about specific instances "off the record," but it was difficult for me to learn this information and have a constructive purpose for this information. It would be easier not to know about irrelevant conversations, but out of respect to the participant, I listened because they asked me to listen to something on their mind, not necessarily related to my research.

### **Storytelling**

When women told their stories, shared their lived experiences, their motivations and interpretations on community organizing campaigns, they disclosed detailed information about the multiple connections of related power connections. These intersectional categories of related power structures included the religious authority of the Catholic Church, the male-dominated organizing staff, or the gender- conforming roles of domestic duties. For example, interviews with Eva, Tina, Antonia, Paulina, and Claudia<sup>6</sup> showed me how significant the Catholic Church was in their lives, whether they went to weekly mass, or made the sign of the cross before facing difficult situations. Some women gave detailed stories of attending church services with their families, or cleaning the church altar, work that helped pay their children's tuition at Catholic School.

These storytelling moments allowed many women to provide details about important moments in their lives, in their own words, and in a manner, that was most comfortable to them.

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<sup>6</sup> These Latina women were interviewed and more information will be provided about "herstory" throughout the dissertation.



Other interview participants mentioned significant events, such as, African Americans to end racially restrictive covenants and leading Open Housing marches, to Native Americans taking over the Coast Guard Station to address poor housing, the need for educational and cultural services, to national protests against the ongoing war in Vietnam, to the fight for Women's Rights. Many of these events provide context of the climate in Milwaukee and the nation but are not the central component of this dissertation. One issue of national importance that impacted cities was the passage of the 1956 Federal Highway Bill and creation of a national interstate highway system. As policy makers at the state, local and federal levels secured funding for this new network it often displaced families, destroyed vibrant communities, and left indelible marks on young children. In an area north of downtown Milwaukee, the Park East Freeway<sup>7</sup> was planned in the 1960s, a vibrant neighborhood with stable housing and small businesses. Raquel lived with her single mom and siblings and remembers how she came home from middle school and realized she would have to inform her mother about their displacement and proposed interstate construction:

I was in middle school when the interstate was being proposed, families were moving, no one had any ideas of what was going on, my mom did not speak English. I had to translate all the information to my mom. It was crazy the way they destroyed the community (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

The interview with Raquel demonstrated her recollection of how the Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956 by President Dwight D. Eisenhower (Law, 1956) negatively affected her life in her neighborhood. As Raquel told her story, she expressed the burden and tremendous responsibility on herself and other young children because they were bilingual and their parents only spoke

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<sup>7</sup> The Park Freeway in Milwaukee was a partially constructed and never finished freeway that was supposed to connect with a Lake Freeway. Residents organized opposition resulting in a dead-end stub. In 2003, Mayor John O. Norquist launched a campaign for the removal of this eyesore and its replacement to a boulevard (Norquist, 1988).

Spanish (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Delgado, 1989). As Raquel told the story, it made her reflect on the policy implications at the federal, state, and local level and how minority communities were an after-thought on new legislation. Raquel learned at a young age that policy changes at a federal, state, and local level about housing, schools, and employment often required her and other children to inform, interpret and educate parents, grandparents about life changing experiences. As Raitz explains, the researcher must consider the participant's memory and emotional state when an event occurred (Raitz, 2001, p. 121).

### **Transcribing and reflecting on interviews as fieldwork**

Each hour of a recorded interview would take two to three hours to transfer audio to text. The audio recording allowed me to interpret the participants' thoughts and responses for each of the open-ended questions. Some of the interviews took much longer because informants fluctuated between Spanish and English. I used "inqscribe" a digital media transcription software allowing me to listen to the audio, write notes, and insert time stamps with the ease of a keystroke. This software permitted me to listen to the soundtracks many times and find exact locations in the recordings. Continual review of audio recordings allowed me to notice certain patterns of code switching, where the participant might comment in Spanish and go back to English or vice-versa. Another area requiring further reflection during the conversation was examining moments of long pauses. Reviewing my personal notes from after some of the interviews helped me recall highlights and challenges during the interview, for example, an interview with Pablo:

It was a challenge to get him back to my interview, waiting for the opportunity, my battery was going to die and I had already spoken with him for 45 minutes. The interview lasted over ninety minutes, I felt exhausted and I only found a nugget of new information (Nájera, Reflection, 2015).

Only after reading my notes, did I remember the challenges of talking with an outspoken man who repeatedly wanted to share detailed information of his past forty years, while my interest

was to learn about some women he coached or mentored. I did gain new knowledge, but this required a great deal of discipline during the interview of asking him to answer my questions. My personal notes describe the stress I felt over my audio recorder possibly failing to record the interview. To avoid a technology failure, I could have fully charged the audio recorder and brought a power-cord, as backup. At future interviews, I made sure to have a power cord and changed my phone to “airplane” mode so the interview would not be interrupted with outside calls.

I was also personally deeply affected by recalling the wonderful experience my own organizing and canvassing of the neighborhood. These are my notes as I waited for Dalia to answer the door:

Standing on her front porch on 10<sup>th</sup> and Madison Streets brought back own feelings of my organizing days. It had probably been close to twenty years that I had been on a porch on this block. I recalled my rookie organizing days of walking up and down the street, knocking on doors, introducing myself, hoping that a resident would talk to me and tell me issues that were important to them. I recalled a housing campaign, the teen dance at Social Development Commission office and the public meeting at St. Patrick’s Church...I waited and wondered if she would answer door. I knocked on her door—she did not answer but when I called her house phone, she came to front door (Nájera, Reflection, 2015).

For me, the best part of interviewing was going to where my interviewees lived, talking to them on their front porch, inside their living room, or in their kitchen. Travelling to the Walker’s Point neighborhood, I more fully appreciated Sarah A. Elwood and Deborah G. Martin’s scholarship about how travelling or being in a participant’s home matters. In these situations, the participant is comfortable and respects that you are taking time to go to where they live. I was affected by the “site within the site,” all my emotions and reflections only happened because I was on the front porch of Dalia’s home, and I experienced the micro geographies of myself as the researcher with the interview participant (Elwood & Martin, 2000, p. 650; Cope, 2005).

Being at Dalia’s home was meaningful for both me and Dalia because we each had personal and shared knowledge of the community, hers in the 1970s and 1980s, mine in the 1990s. I

reflected on my past organizing efforts and thought, “our efforts to close drug houses and hold absentee landlords accountable for properties seemed to have impacted efforts to stabilize the neighborhood” (Nájera, Reflection, 2015). I loved visiting the neighborhoods, seeing how far along the neighborhood park had been enhanced, or walking through a relatively clean neighborhood, not seeing “boarded up” vacant houses. It was refreshing to know that two major nonprofits, Social Development Commission (SDC)—South Campus and the United Community Center, were still vibrant anchor institutions in the “*barrio*” (slang for neighborhood).

My field notes from two interviews demonstrate the importance of taking personal notes that add context to the experience, my own emotions, anxieties, concerns, preferences, as well as, general observations about power relations from an informal point of view. After reading my notes from the first interview, I remember the angst and awkwardness of interviewing a male organizer, while I felt completely comfortable and confident with the white female organizer in her kitchen. Part of my unease arose from knowing his stature, his leadership and dominance within the community, while the woman was unknown, and although she did great things, did not have the same power, stature or respect in the broader community. I do regret not being more disciplined about taking the time to write detailed immediate notes after each interview. Such notes would be valuable information that could provide context to the multiple positions and identities an interviewer must negotiate and compromise during all stages of the interview—before, during and after the interview.

### **Coding and analyzing interview data**

I drew from Meghan Cope’s four-point plan of “looking for conditions, interactions, strategies/tactics, and consequences” (Cope, 2005, p. 281) to understand the data. Reviewing the content and recognizing consistent patterns or commonalities is the beginning of analysis. Once this process is done two to three times, certain themes start to surface in the data. Some of the

challenges with codes and coding are the interpretation of the words and phrases. Another researcher might code my findings differently. In Figure 3.2, when Efrain calls Daniela a “*mari-macho*” (inflammatory comment towards a lesbian woman for being “butch”), I coded this interaction as discrimination, sexism, and racism whereas another researcher might say Efrain is “misogynistic.”

According to Johnny Saldaña, the process of coding research is a craft that demands time and practice, a learned craft of making sense of the data (2009). This requires multiple rounds of reading the transcripts and discussing techniques of making sense of a plethora of data with other scholars. Furthermore, engaging and being part of the interview process allowed me spend time on transcriptions and reflect on the tremendous accomplishments women made despite contentious moments in the supposed pan-Latino community of Milwaukee.

Below, as shown in Figure 3.2, I used the narrative from my interview with Daniela to reflect on the coding process. From two statements, the themes of chauvinism, sexism, and empowerment were brought to the forefront. Once these themes were identified, I applied an intersectional lens to further analyze the interactions between this Latino and Latina. The last column provides greater detail looking at the multiple axes that Latinas, in this case Daniela, regularly encounter in conversations with male colleagues. The title of this infographic is from an interview with Daniela (2015).

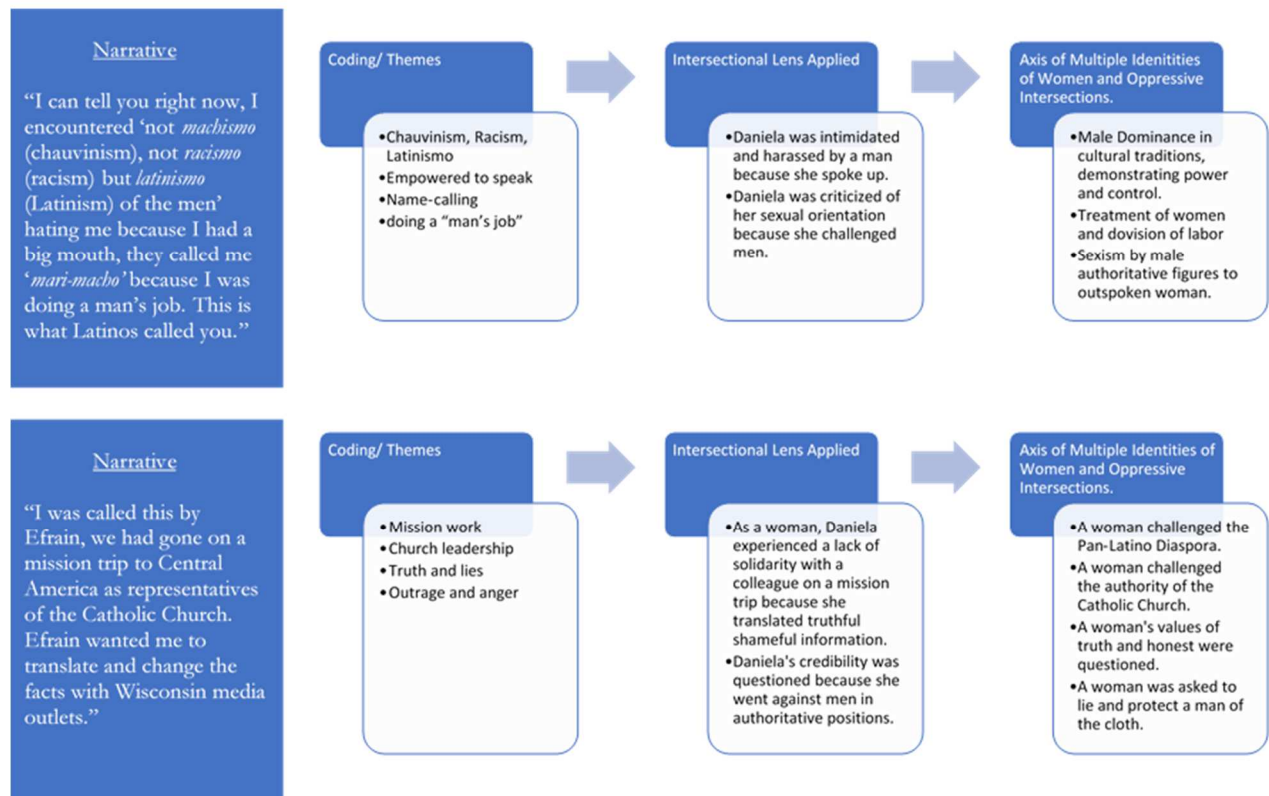


Figure 3.2 "Not Machismo, Not Racism but The *Latinismo* Of Men" (Waitt, 2010).

The seven-step strategy outlined by Gordon Waitt for discourse analysis was useful in my analysis of the interview texts. I knew that I would be using the transcripts of the open-ended interviews and archival materials as my source materials. Reading all the material several times allowed me to familiarize myself with the texts, and most importantly, it allowed me to "code for organization and again for interpretation" (2010, p. 220). After reading each transcript two to three times, I analyzed sections of the narrative by creating four columns, using line by line analysis (Charmaz & Belgrave, 2012; Crang, 2003). The narrative was the first column, the second column identified themes, the third column explained the intersectional lens applied, and the fourth column analyzed the intersectional categories of related power structures related to the narrative.

In Figure 3.2, I created an infographic to more fully explain how I applied Gordon Waitt's analysis about revealing the intersectional categories of power relationships, thoughts, and actions of

participants (2010). Daniela's recollection of her colleague on a mission trip to El Salvador to "change the facts" shows her understanding of how Efrain thought he could use male-dominance and privilege, to his personal benefit. The second column in Figure 3.2, is straightforward in identifying key themes of the narrative. This was done after I became familiar with the text and after several revisions. The third column allowed me to apply an intersectional lens from the informant's position to interpret the multiple intersections and related power structures and the number of oppressive actions by a fellow volunteer on a mission trip. Finally, the fourth column continues the analysis by examining the various power structures that inform not only the participant, but the other person in the conversation.

When Efrain asks Daniela to "translate and change the facts," Daniela understands the multiple oppressive power structures of male chauvinism and hierarchy in the Latino culture, the authority of the Catholic Church, sexist attitudes, gender conforming roles of Latina women obeying Latino men, and abuse of power. Listening to Daniela's account, her candid assessment of interactions is consistent with treatment and actions of oppressive Latino men in the community (Waite, 2010; Rose, 1997).

In Figure 3.3, the narrative provided by Daniela shares another interaction consistent with the untruthful behavior by Efrain, a male volunteer on the mission trip. It is interesting to note how Efrain uses the Catholic Church, an institution with great authority in the Latino culture, to support his argument of "covering up the truth." Daniela's own story is about coming from an oppressive country where she was not allowed to speak out, and how she felt empowered in the United States by the right to share facts or truth whenever possible. During the opening moments of my interview with Daniela, I learned about her family members murdered in El Salvador's civil war, and this allowed me to understand her negative reaction for the actions of a fellow volunteer on a mission trip.

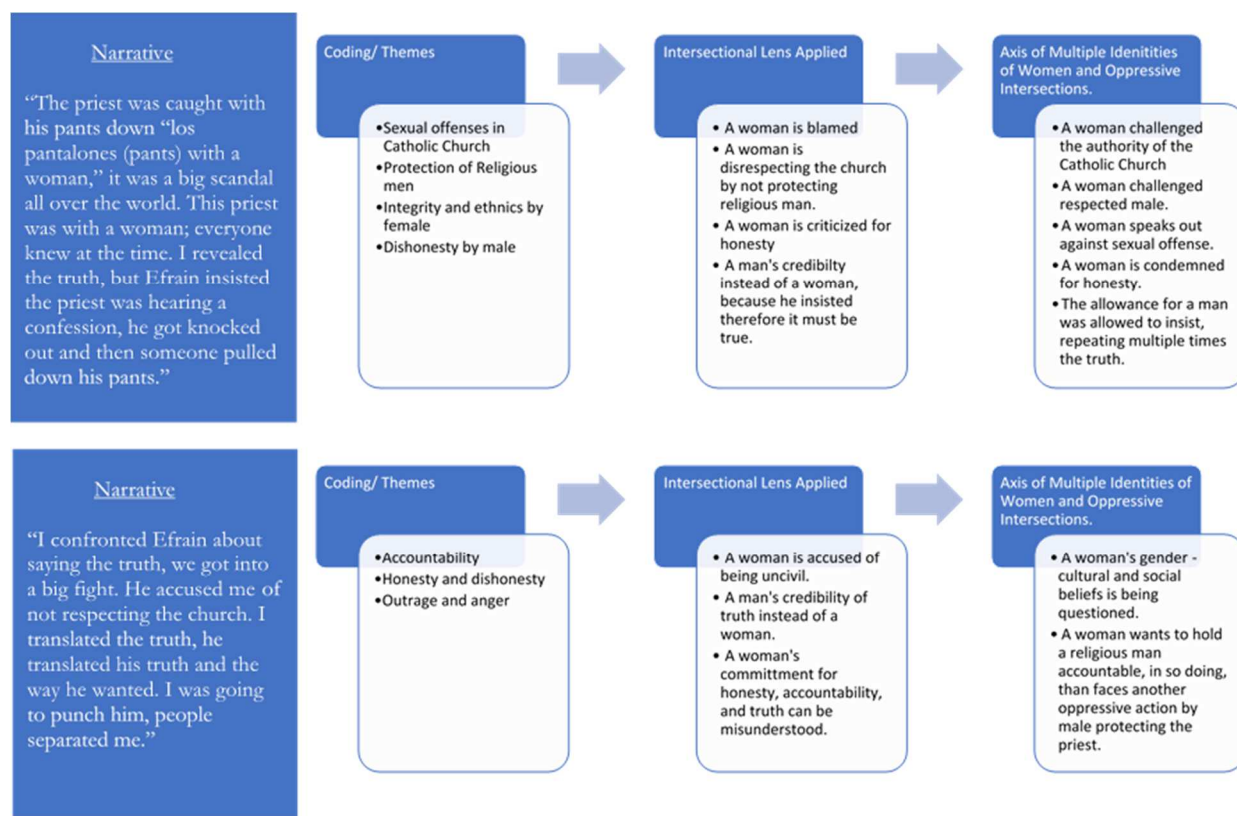


Figure 3.3 Additional example of utilizing Waitt's interview analysis (2016).

In the second column of Figure 3.3, I found themes of scandal, protection of the priest, truth and honesty, accusations, and feeling of anger are prevalent. Third, from Daniela's point of view, the intersectional lens applied shows the barrage of negative meanings interpreted by a Latino man of her truthful actions. The woman who has the affair with the priest is blamed, Daniela is accused of disrespecting the church and community, and is perceived as hysterical when she wanted to punch Efrain (Waitt, 2010; Rose, 1997). Again, the discourse analysis allowed me to explain the differences between this man and this woman, and how Efrain demonstrated oppressive actions toward Daniela. Using grounded theory in the previous mentioned examples shows how much information can be derived from a narrative. Being flexible and open to the research was a key learning moment; I knew I needed to come to the research without preconceived thematic ideas. Finding the relevant themes also allowed me to make connections with the conversations of other



scholars in the field and see how my research was contributing new perspectives to the field. I understand the complex web of relationships that Latinas have in their families, church, neighborhoods, and the broader Pan-Latino community.

Figure 3.3, describes lay volunteers treating each other in a hostile and threatening manner, while they are on a mission trip to help serve the needy of El Salvador. I analyzed this by thinking of Daniela's narrative in all its vivid detail in relation to the power structures and labels that constitute discourses of gender, ethnicity, identity, race, heteronormative, and religious authority. The interviews proved challenging because they offered so much rich text. I needed to prioritize the most important themes, and I realized not all the text could be used for this research (Waitt, 2010; Allen & Montell, 1981).

The most important insights of using grounded theory in the analysis of narratives is finding common themes between Latinas who are from different ethnicities, age, or educational backgrounds but all of whom faced oppressive situations. A second round of coding allows the researcher to use an intersectional lens to understand the context of the narrative. Finally, the third round of coding allows the researcher to examine how social inequality and power impact gender, class, and ethnicity among Latinas. Being aware that historical and political contexts shape actions of people, I realized that the interviews did not provide all the information I needed, so I conducted additional research in the local Milwaukee archives.

### **Archival Research**

Another important part of the research was examining existing archival research from multiple sources including Mary Anne McNulty's personal collection, the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee Archives, the Marquette University Archives, and the Wisconsin Historical Society. The following section provides some context about the time and effort required to conduct archival fieldwork. First, I learned the policies of each institution, whether they allow only pencils, their

copying charges and limited to no use of pictures. Second, I learned to take copious notes for future phases in archival work (Allen & Montell, 1981; M. Roche, 2010). Second, archival research takes time, so it is very important to keep a detailed log of activities, of folders, and files that require further review. Often, I ran out of time, days passed before I could return to the archives, and my notes for next steps were critical for ongoing research. Nonetheless, working in the archives provided me with a greater sense of the people creating history, the archivists preserving history, and the scholars who write about history.

It was necessary to spend many hours at local institutions reviewing primary and secondary source documents to have a full picture of the events of those decades (Harris, 2001; Raitz, 2001; M. Roche, 2010; Roy, 2010; Hodder, 2000). I was inundated with new information as I reviewed historical information in primary source documents, newspaper articles, pictures, and reports. Cole Harris has written about the challenges of ‘being taken over by the archives’, and not knowing what to do with all the information and in a sense ‘the archives will have swallowed the researcher’ (Harris, 2001, p. 331). Often during the archival research process, gaining knowledge about indirect events required tremendous discipline to stay focused on the topic of interest. According to Michael Roche, patience, precision, critical reflection, a sense of historical or geographical context, and making connections between texts and images (M. Roche, 2010, p. 188; Mintz, 2003) are critical in archival research.

Subsequent sections will describe the other archival collections I used, their strengths, and their gaps. Steven Mintz argues that “nothing brings the past to life like quite like primary sources” (Mintz, 2003). This archival material allowed me to triangulate and to construct history in the early 1970s (Harris, 2001; Raitz, 2001; M. Roche, 2010; Roy, 2010; Hodder, 2000). Conducting archival research also solidified the purpose of my research and showed the lack of archived materials available in archival departments in major universities and historical museums at the local level. The

next section will interpret relevant documents from the Mary Anne McNulty collection<sup>8</sup> to understand how these documents, letters, photographs, and newspaper articles provide a rich story of leadership in Milwaukee's Latino community.

### **Mary Anne McNulty collection**

The personal collection of Mary Anne McNulty, former community organizer, co-founder of SWEAT Associates, and 12<sup>th</sup> District Alderwoman (1983 – 1992) is the beginning of my understanding of her leadership and community organizing efforts in Milwaukee's Latino community. SWEAT Associates, a coalition of unemployed or underemployed individuals who came together and were willing to work for a job.

When Mary Anne passed away in 2009, her family and closest friends went to clean her cottage home on 3<sup>rd</sup> and Lapham Street on the South Side of Milwaukee. It was my urban studies training that piqued my interest in finding out the contents of the personal papers in those three boxes. These boxes were going to be thrown out, but I asked the family's permission to preserve them, and they gave them to me. I quickly learned how much I and the broader Milwaukee community, did not know about Mary Anne McNulty's organizing contributions, her influences on several nonprofit organizations, and most importantly, on the lives of Latinas in Milwaukee's history. Organizing the materials in the boxes raised questions about McNulty's role in galvanizing activism in the Milwaukee Latino community, but also underscored the lack of scholarship on key Latina women involved in community organizing and community building efforts.

Reviewing documents and newspapers in the Mary Anne McNulty collection taught me more about the role of women in equity campaigns for housing, bilingual education, youth

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<sup>8</sup> Since 2009, I have organized all the documents, photographs, periodicals, and awards into three separate boxes. A complete directory can be found in Appendix C.

programming, employment, and public safety campaigns. I learned about McNulty's role as a founding organizer of SWEAT Associates, and more detailed information on the formation of this organization that will be detailed in Chapter 5. It was only after looking for evidence from multiple perspectives that I learned about the role of Latina and non-Latina women in different community organizing campaigns. Although these women's names were often cited in documents and articles, I realized the lack of scholarship and documentation about these women and their community-building efforts required additional data collections with in-depth interviews. From the preliminary archival work with the Mary Anne McNulty collection, I discovered she served as a role model and inspiration for Latinas in Milwaukee.

Researching these archival records allowed me to create a timeline of McNulty's life, and showed me how her strong Irish - Catholic upbringing in Chicago greatly guided her work in social activism in Milwaukee. Her strong work-ethic instilled by her parents, and her commitment to advocacy work at St. Justin's Catholic Church were the basis for her community activism, not only in Chicago, but throughout the rest of her life. According to Geertz, ethnographers are faced with a "multiplicity of complex conceptual structures, many of them superimposed upon or knotted into one another, which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit, and which the ethnographer must contrive somehow first to grasp and then to render" (Geertz, 1973, p. 10).

My interest in the materials in the boxes led to the accidental production and creation of archival materials, that I have titled the Mary Anne McNulty collection. Cataloguing these three boxes of materials required me to assess, organize, and continue preservation of materials in my home. Reviewing all the materials, I assembled Box 1 with specific information related to her work in community building, creating folders with descriptive headings, such as: Chicago – The Wonder Years (McNulty, Chicago - *The Wonder Years*, n.d), FBI Year (McNulty M. A., FBI Year, n.d.), Nicaraguan Mission Trip (McNulty M. A., Nicaraguan Mission Trip, n.d.), a personal notebook "*My*

*Log – it wishes it was still a tree*<sup>9</sup> (McNulty M. A., n.d.) and so on. Box 1 contains 31 folders. Box 2 contains political materials and her candidacy for public office for the elections of 1972, 1973, and 1983 (McNulty M. A., Political information on election campaigns, n.d.). In addition, newspaper articles covering the ward results, advertisements for Mary Anne McNulty, or her opponents, and general campaign literature are included in the collection. Box 3, is a collection of plaques awarded to Mary Anne for her dedication and commitment to the south side (McNulty M. A., Collection of Awards, n.d.). The McNulty collection is stored in a locked air-conditioned room at my home.

The original boxes contained papers related to SWEAT Associates, an organization formed by Mary Anne McNulty and colleagues, to help unemployed men and women eager to work. Mary Anne McNulty preserved these documents in her home for over forty years. We cannot, and do not know why, McNulty saved these documents, but I can only guess that she wanted to share her experience with future generations. Determining the contents of the boxes was a time-consuming but enjoyable process, because holding historic documents from 1971 is a unique feeling; you can begin to imagine the authors of the document. Analysis of all the materials allowed me to identify the first five out of the twelve Latina women who were critical to community- organizing efforts in Milwaukee’s Latino community.

The creation of SWEAT by residents in Milwaukee’s Latino community arose because of their frustrations about the lack of programs, services, and resources to the neighborhood. McNulty’s personal papers explain why she became involved in community organizing and community development. A major reason for the creation of SWEAT Associates was to spoof the

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<sup>9</sup> Where Mary Anne wrote daily recording of events throughout the day, she titled as thus; hereafter referred to as “My Log.”

federal and local policies which paid attention, Mary Anne felt, to one side of town, the north side, rather than the south Latino side. The following is an excerpt from Mary Anne's papers:

In many ways, the south side was typical of what was happening throughout the nation. People, with businesses and money were leaving the central city. Homes that were previously privately owned were being taken over by slum landlords. Local neighborhood business areas were being vacated, leaving empty store fronts and a lot of unmet needs for service left behind. The community was continuing to segregate itself. At one time, the Poles had separated from the Germans, then the Germans separated from the Serbians. Now, many were moving away from the Latino and poor white population on the near south side. There was increased unemployment among Latinos and poor Whites (McNulty M. A., personal paper, n.d.).

SWEAT Associates was organized to demonstrate that unemployment was not caused by lazy people. People were willing to work, but there were no available jobs at a decent rate. Also, SWEAT had to determine which governmental body was responsible for certain services or programs (daycare, tot lots, senior citizen programming, building inspectors, etc. (McNulty M. A., SWEAT Associates, n.d.).

Using grounded theory and discourse analysis, the key themes of poverty, white flight, segregation, and institutions of power became relevant in analyzing this text. From an intersectional approach, Mary Anne McNulty articulates the power structures in local government, the business community and her motivation to organize and work for social change. Mary Anne McNulty defined community development as working on campaigns to improve the physical infrastructure of parks, and recreational spaces for children and families, senior citizen programming, improved housing conditions, neighborhood safety programs, daycare services, quality schools and most importantly the creation of jobs (McNulty M. A., SWEAT Associates, n.d.). Reading her files revealed how instrumental she was in providing advice on campaigns to close drug houses and to fight absentee landlords, or to increase recreational programs for children in the 12<sup>th</sup> District.

In the McNulty collection, evidence about the beginnings of racial tensions between the Latino and African American community surface. References are made to the inequities in the

allocation of resources related to the Model Cities Program. Mary Anne McNulty's south side of Chicago background provided her with a great understanding of the racial divide between African Americans and the Irish community. The interviews and the information in Box 2 shows that her most agonizing vote while serving on the Common Council of Milwaukee was on the renaming of the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Viaduct to the Fr. James Groppi Unity Bridge in 1988. She voted against it based on her constituency's wishes, not her own. For the purposes of this research, I did not include information found in Box 2 because it focused on her political career, voter turnout, and urban policy in the City of Milwaukee. All the material in Box 2 could be an area for further research.

Detailed information in Chapter 5 provides historical background of Mary Anne McNulty's heightened awareness and involvement in social conscious- raising activities as she attempted to keep the peace when Dr. Martin Luther King marched on Chicago's south side in 1966. When McNulty moved to the Polish American community on Milwaukee's south side, she learned about the nearly identical reaction of Whites in Milwaukee against African American demonstrators when they marched for Open Housing legislation. Fr. James Groppi, the Youth Commandos, clergy, and other supporters totaling nearly 200 people, faced angry white people who targeted them with racial slurs and threw objects at them.

### **University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM)**

The UWM archival resources used in my study include papers from four male activists in Milwaukee's Latino community. First, the "Tony Báez Papers, 1968 – 2008." These files relate to Báez's educational efforts in Milwaukee Public Schools, the Milwaukee Area Technical College, and the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (Báez, 1968-2008). The collection of Dr. Tony Báez provides excellent evidence of his leadership in educational reform efforts, especially his passion for promoting bilingual education in the City of Milwaukee and other urban areas throughout the United States.

The second collection included the “Roberto Hernandez Papers, 1964 -1994” (Hernandez, 1964-1994). Again, we have papers from another well-known Latino man. Hernandez helped establish the Spanish Speaking Outreach Institute by working with a group of students, demanding answers from UWM Chancellor Schroeder about Latino student access to higher education at UWM. The Roberto Hernandez papers are a superb collection that includes many pictures of the late Roberto Hernandez in his personal and professional life but does not provide any narrative with the photographs.

The third collection is the “Juan Alvarez Cuauhtémoc Photographic Collection of *El Movimiento* [the movement] in Milwaukee’s Latino Community, 1968-1971” (Alvarez, 2005). These photos capture aspects of organizing efforts at rallies, and hearings calling people to action. Most of the pictures were intended for the political community newspaper, *La Guardia* sponsored by the La Guardia Colectiva<sup>10</sup>. This collection consists of 36 photographs during the Latino civil rights movement. Several highlight different students, activists, and community members at protests and rallies. The photographs capture the involvement of key men who were on the front lines of different organizing campaigns including Juan Alvarez Cuauhtémoc, Rano Cano, Ernesto Chacon, Salvador Sanchez, Cesar Chavez, Miguel Delgado, William Quiles, Mr. Puente, Frank Gonzalez, Fr. James Groppi, Roberto Hernandez, and Joe “Vesugo” Mendoza. Although women are present in the photographs of the takeover of the Chancellor’s office, only two are mentioned by name (Alvarez, 2005).

The fourth collection is the “Arnoldo Sevilla: Milwaukee Mexican American Interviews from 1974-1977” (Sevilla, 1990). This collection includes audio recordings and photographs of 11

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<sup>10</sup> *La Guardia Colectiva*, a non-profit media organization served Milwaukee’s Chicano and Boricua community since the fall of 1969. The organization published *La Guardia*, a monthly bilingual newspaper to disseminate information to residents of Latin neighborhoods (1973).



residents who share biographical information, business opportunities and the role of religion with Mexican Americans in Milwaukee. Again, the majority of the interviews are of men including Antonio Roco, Frank Gross, Frederico Garcia Herrera, Juan Arenas, Felix Gonzalez, Porforio Gonzalez, Lupe Renteria, Juan Sanchez, Francisco Sanchez, and Angel Talamantes. There is mention of two women, Margarita Gonzalez and Esperanza Chavez, who are present at their interviews with their partners (Sevilla, 1990).

Again, all these collections provide incredible contextual background about activism in Milwaukee, highlighting the contributions of male Latino activists. They do, however, lack a comprehensive collection about Latina activism in Milwaukee. In some of the above collections, women are mentioned in the minutes of documents as being present, or a photograph might show women at a protest, but the captions and descriptions center on the men. I did find one transcript of a longtime activist, Juanita Renteria, who shared her sentiments about the civil rights movement in Milwaukee (Zakhar, 1983-1984). It was useful to know her involvement and collaboration with Milwaukee's African American community but she did not provide a great deal of insight on the connections with Milwaukee's Latin community.

### **March on Milwaukee collection**

The March on Milwaukee collection at UWM provides an array of primary and secondary sources to help educate people on the civil rights movement in Milwaukee (The March on Milwaukee: civil rights history project, 2010-). The digital collection includes papers of selected leaders, photographs, oral history interviews, timeline of events, print and media footage, maps, and other relevant resources. The March on Milwaukee collections provides a snapshot of the discrimination and oppression facing African Americans in Milwaukee. The digital archives allowed me to find specific events coinciding with the African American, European- American and Latino neighborhoods, especially regarding the Open Housing march from the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Viaduct Bridge to

Kosciusko Park. Review of audio, video, and manuscripts document the racial tensions of the white community on the near south side with African Americans in relation to open housing and desegregation in Milwaukee Public Schools.

Another key collection within the March on Milwaukee website were records, newspaper clipping, and interviews related to education, specifically local desegregation efforts in Milwaukee Public Schools. The Barbee Papers, the Groppi Papers, the Milwaukee United School Integration Committee (MUSIC) records, and Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) records provided contextual information about the challenges with Milwaukee Public Schools administration and the Milwaukee School Board (The March on Milwaukee: civil rights history project, 2010-). In 1976, the U.S. Supreme Court determined that Milwaukee Public Schools were segregated and must come up with a plan to fix the problem (*Amos et al. v. Board of School Directors of the City of Milwaukee*, 1976). The solution proposed by MPS was the creation of magnet schools, schools that would have specialized programs, from hospitality, service, agricultural, cultural arts, and industry, with the hopes of integrating Black and white children (March on Milwaukee, n.d.). According to Nicole:

Don't forget the specialty schools were majority white, some Black kids did benefit from desegregation in the short term but the majority of Black kids did not. At the same time, Latino kids were counted as white, they were not separated out and this was a big issue of contention (Nicole, Interview, 2015).

The social context of desegregation in Milwaukee is important because it shows how Latinos' sentiments of identifying as a separate ethnicity apart from white and Black were completely disregarded, creating a sense of invisibility for Latinos within Milwaukee Public Schools.

### **Marquette University**

Another important oral history project related to local elected officials in the Greater Milwaukee Area is held at Marquette University's Raynor Memorial Library, Special Collections and Archives Department. Dr. Janet Boles recorded 55 interviews with elected county and municipal

government officials, administrators of local government departments, and community advocates, discussing policy networks and community issues in the Greater Milwaukee Area. The “*Milwaukee Women’s Policy Networks Oral History Project*” (Boles, 1990) provides insights about the networks within varied levels of government, connections with practitioners, and community advocates.

While Dr. Boles’s project provides incredible and valuable oral histories of white and African American women, showing how many of them were part of government institutions or nonprofit organizations related to domestic violence, education, politics, or employment, Dr. Boles overlooked the growing presence and activism of Latinas in the city. Thankfully, the collection did include an interview with Mary Anne McNulty, in which she referenced her work in Milwaukee’s Latino community (McNulty, M. A., 1990).

### **Milwaukee County Historical Society**

Three small collections of folders with annual reports from the Council for the Spanish Speaking, United Community Center, Hispanic Community Directories, and newspaper copies from *Milwaukee Journal*, *Wisconsin Magazine*, *La Guardia* and *El Universal* are included on site.

A box with papers from the Council for the Spanish Speaking provides documentation on the connections to the Zonta Club of Milwaukee. The Zonta Club of Milwaukee, established over 90 years ago, supported women in business and diverse professions, and advocated on issues affecting the status of women. In the 1970s, a Zontian member, Meta Steinfert, bequeathed \$17,000 to help purchase the building and establishment of the Council for the Spanish Speaking. Mrs. Steinfert worked tirelessly, learning about Spanish-speaking cultures and became knowledgeable about Milwaukee’s Latinos. Today, *Centro Hispano* (Spanish Center formerly called Council for the Spanish Speaking) continues to celebrate 53 years of programming in education, housing, and social service; they are still located in the same building at 614 W. National Avenue (Zonta Club of Milwaukee).

Archival research means not only examining the materials in the collection, but also realizing how much information is missing. It was hard to believe that only three small boxes on the Latino community existed at the Milwaukee County Historical Society. The three folders at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee only included collections from four prominent Latino men. The collections at each institution are a good beginning but can be enhanced with archival materials of Latina activism in Milwaukee. Conducting archival research in local institutions was imperative to know what information had been collected, by whom, during what time period and whether there was any evidence of the contributions of Latina activists. Sitting at the tables of each institution left me in disbelief about the lack of scholarship about Latinas, but also provided a motivation and resolve to complete my research.

I met with staff from the UWM's Golda Meir Library to inquire about the process of creating a community-organizing collection for the Archives department. An in-depth process is required being a contributor, and I quickly realized my good intentions of adding this scholarship to the Golda Meir archives was taking me on a tangent away from my research. This endeavor could be a possible collaboration in the near future; I would propose inviting participants who have documents preserved in their homes to consider donating their papers to UWM for future generations.

## **Conclusion**

The research design of my dissertation drew on my positionality, including my experience as a community organizer, to shape and guide the interviews. Having the experience of community organizer at the neighborhood, statewide, and national level, gave me a sense of familiarity and understanding of the organizing skills required on social justice campaigns. My work as an organizer in the 1990s could not compare to the work of the 1970s, but nevertheless helped give me some insights into, and a certain perspective on, the intersections of family, class, ethnicity, and gender

from an earlier generation. To enhance my research, I interviewed 25 individuals who gave in-depth accounts of their experiences, interpretations, and understanding of the of issues impacting them, their families, and community members. Finally, conducting archival research with local institutions in Milwaukee confirmed my suspicions about the lack of knowledge and scholarship about Latina activism in Milwaukee.

Engaging in qualitative research allowed me to uncover and discover the tremendous opportunities that lie ahead, not only for Latinos, but other diverse communities in Milwaukee and of rewriting and reinterpretation of historical events. Of the 25 interview subjects, seven of them (close to 30%) had personal collections in their homes; often they mentioned these papers were in their basement. Unfortunately, if these individuals do not share this information with their families or local archival departments, this information could be lost. This is an urgent concern for the future of Latina scholarship in Milwaukee. Overlooking the value of their documents could speak to larger issues of women's hesitancy about recognizing the value of their work and perhaps seeing it as part of their familial obligations. Why do the men think about contributing their materials, documents and photographs to the archives yet women do not? Why were women saving this information? What are their hopes for their documents, newspaper articles, and photographs? An in-depth analysis or discussion with Latinas about their personal collections is a pending collaborative research opportunity in the coming years. As a researcher, my hope is to have women donate items to the UWM Library or Wisconsin Historical Society, so future generations can learn about the many forms of activism that took place in Milwaukee in the 1970s.

While each of the following chapters provides empirical findings about the impacts and gendered discourses in community organizing, my research also contributes new knowledge on how intersectionality informs and complicates the analysis of multi-cultural community organizing. Many of the Latinas shared the challenges of entering the field of activism, an uncommon and

unacceptable profession for traditional women in Latino cultures. The complex connection of ethnicity, citizenship status, and identity is a theme that continuously surfaced during the interviews. Latinas discussed wanting to address the issues impacting the Latino community, because they felt ignored since they were neither Black nor white. Whether women were U.S. born, Puerto Rican, Central or South American, they had to negotiate and compromise different situations throughout their lives. I understand the notion of being “*la guera*” (light skin tone) and the unspoken privileges of being white. Being a first-generation American, I understand having multiple identities, being born in the United States, but wanting to embrace and preserve my cultural heritage.

Another significant finding for me is the importance of access to higher education campaigns. All the activists involved with increasing the enrollment of Latinos in the 1970s, paved the way for me and thousands of Latinos into professional careers. The recollections of women working full-time, going to school part-time, raising children, getting support from family, and going to school in an untraditional manner, was my previous, and is my current, situation. Empathizing with some women who could not break out of their cycle of poverty to obtain higher education and knowing young girls in my daughter’s school who are battling these same cycles of poverty, are heart-wrenching experiences. Although we have had some success in higher education, more progress is needed for Latinos, to not just enter college, but to graduate.

Since 2009, I have been personally engaged with the Mary Anne McNulty collection, having the foresight, and intuition to save the boxes, and then taking the time to study and organize the contents. My personal connection with Mary Anne McNulty inspired me to learn more about her life. Even though we had a relationship for over 15 years, I wish I had asked her if she had kept any personal papers from her organizing days. I think one thing to learn from my own experience, is we should take time to ask mentors and friends what items they might have in a box or a folder tucked away in their basement. As a new scholar, another research finding is to not underestimate how

your own life experience adds value in multiple dimensions when you are engaged in qualitative research. My experience as a community organizer, being bilingual and bicultural, a first-generation college student, daughter of immigrants and having direct knowledge of community organizing, facilitated easy conversations between me and the interview participants. The benefits of being a practitioner, working in the field and conducting research in the university allowed me to have more leverage than a researcher with no experience in the field. I realized that years of conducting one-on-one interviews with diverse residents, business owners, and clergy in the community allowed me to hone my listening skills, enhance my interpretation and analysis, and helped mobilize men and women into action.

Making the leap from practitioner to scholar has been a struggle, but I realize that my multiple experiences interconnected with my scholarship and contributed new knowledge to the study of intersections of ethnicity, gender, class and race in Latina activism in Milwaukee.

Personally, my interest of wanting to make a difference at the university or within the City of Milwaukee, building partnerships and coalitions to solve major problems are relatable interests demonstrated by Mary Anne McNulty. Reading newspaper articles and opinions from people who shared sentiments that Mary Anne McNulty was “not qualified,” or “too young,” or an “outsider” were similar to comments I heard in 2016 when I ran for office—over forty years later.

## Chapter 4

### Collisions of Diasporas:

#### Interethnic and Interracial Relations Between Milwaukee's Polonia and The New Latin Community



Figure 4.1 "Anglo-Latin Gulf Hard to Bridge" (Kirkhorn, 1973, p.1).

In the clipping above, the title contradicts the image, as it is obvious that the three young boys sitting on a ledge are talking and smiling. It appears the children had no problems with each other. In this special 1973 series to *The Milwaukee Journal*, journalist Michael Kirkhorn describes the growing Latino population living on Milwaukee's south side, and how the Anglo community failed to understand the Latin community, this lack heightened by the language difference. Kirkhorn reported Julian Lierandi, Director of Bilingual programs at South Division High School saying:

Latin students were often made to feel like outsiders, and that they were not part of it ... that there was no room for them to join the mainstream. Therefore, they act like outsiders. When you feel like an outsider the school becomes a legal imposition (Kirkhorn, 1973, p. 22).



This sentiment permeated both the classrooms, and throughout the Milwaukee Public School system. Kirkhorn describes how the allocation of \$239,000 for bilingual and bicultural programs only frustrated sentiments between Latinos and administrators, he stated, “the distance between Latin politicians and Anglo outsiders is not easily bridged – not even with money” (1973, p.22).

It is interesting to note how the journalist reverses the understanding and discourse between the Anglos and Latinos, stating the Anglo as the outsider, and the Latino activist (politician) as the insider. This is very important because it captures how Anglos’ position and domination on Milwaukee’s south side changed quickly when the Latin newcomers arrived. Likewise, for the Latin community, they did not feel that their needs were being met.

To understand the urban social geography of Milwaukee, it is critical to know this mid-sized city in the Great Lakes region has a history of polarization and segregation of different ethnic and racial groups. The history of newcomers who colonized the Great Lakes Region dates to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, when the native peoples were forced to move west, in many cases losing their culture, identity, and language (Loew, 2013). As European immigration increased in the nineteenth century, those escaping economic hardships or political turmoil in Europe settled in large numbers in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. In many ways, the cycle of dominant ethnic diasporas began with the Germans at the top of the social, political, and economic rungs in Milwaukee in the early to late nineteenth century, while the Polish community was at the bottom (Zukowski, 2009). The dynamics of interethnic and interracial relations has been a constant issue in Milwaukee’s history. For the purposes of my dissertation, I will focus on the relations between persons of Spanish-speaking ancestry, African American ancestry, and the Polish American community located on the south side of Milwaukee.

The identity and the names of the different groups is complex because the name chosen might describe a personal belief of an individual, a territory, language ability, cultural, racial, or

genetic identity. The question of how a Spanish-speaking person identifies him or herself is a personal decision. Many think of the Hispanic term, deriving from the word *Hispania*, an area related to the Iberian Peninsula, with a clear association to Spain. Over the years, the United States Census Bureau has identified persons of Spanish-speaking descent as Hispanics. The idea that that this adjective was derived by the U.S. government or is associated with colonizers, is unacceptable to some Latino/as. Subsequent terms, Latino/a or Latin, was used as a word describing individuals with ancestry from any Latin American country. Some in the Anglo, or white community, use Latin, Latino/a and Hispanic interchangeably, making a clear distinction that they are non-white. In the *Milwaukee Journal* at the time, the description of Latins was “Mexican, Puerto Rican or Cuban” (Kirkhorn, 1973). Other terms used in the predominant Spanish-speaking groups in Milwaukee are for persons of Mexican or Puerto Rican descent. Some Mexicans who were raised in the southwestern part of the United States and want to recognize their indigenous roots use the word Chicano/a, and likewise, in the Puerto Rican community, some use the word *Boricua*, which refers to their *Taino* indigenous roots. A more recent gender-neutral name given to individuals of Spanish-speaking ancestry is Latinx. Throughout this dissertation, I will use the names used by participants during the interview. I will reflect on and unpack the meaning of the identity dependent on which person uses the identifying ethnic name and situation.

This chapter draws on primary sources, interviews with Polish Americans, African Americans and Latino/as, as well as using secondary sources to develop the knowledge of Latin peoples’ entry into Milwaukee. These historical documents about Milwaukee during the early 1970s describes the dominance of the Polish American community in terms of social, economic, and political power. Polish Americans led economic development efforts by creating a residential district with high rates of homeownership, a robust local business community, and a strong faith community. The high rates of homeownership on Milwaukee’s south side created stable

neighborhoods starting in the 1870s and continuing until the late 1960s. For nearly one hundred years, the Polish immigrant community controlled most aspects of the social, economic, and political welfare of Polish residents, and became known as the “Polish machine.” The Polish community in Milwaukee grew to 100,000 by 1915, establishing a vibrant commercial and residential district, so much so that the near south side became known as *Polonia* (Zukowski, 2009).

During the late 1960s, new ethnic groups, African Americans and Latins, relocated and moved to Milwaukee drawn by a strong manufacturing sector, availability of affordable housing, and a strong educational system (Rodriguez, M., 2011; Rodriguez & Sava, 2006). The Polish American felt their schools were being overtaken by Latino/a students and the growing Latino presence in Catholic churches threatened religious ways of the church. Latins wanted to hear church services in Spanish, and they wanted to celebrate “*Quinceñeras*” (15<sup>th</sup> birthday) for young ladies. This a typical coming of age ritual for 15-year-old young ladies’ rite of passage from childhood to womanhood. Latins longed for celebrations with someone who spoke Spanish, or they wanted to celebrate traditional birthday celebrations. The northern migration of Blacks to Milwaukee rose in record numbers from 1940 to 1970 (Geib, 1998), followed by Latin populations from 1960 to 1980 (Rodriguez, J., 2014). The increased presence of both of these groups in the late 1960s and 1970s led to Polish Americans feeling threatened. All these factors were strong during the 1950s; the de-industrialization era, and the creation of the national interstate system, took its toll in Milwaukee. The decadal prominence of the Polish community began to dissipate as newcomers relocated into the Milwaukee area. The growing presence of both African Americans on Milwaukee’s north side, and the Latino community in south side schools, churches and neighborhoods became more evident with each passing year. In addition, the construction of the national interstate system encouraged new migration patterns in Milwaukee, and across the United States (Gurda, 1999; Rodriguez & Sava, 2006; Zukowski, 2009). The clash of the ethnic and racial groups encouraged in Latina activism,

especially regarding the inequities in the public-school system and lack of federal resources to local neighborhoods.

In each community, policies and practices were implemented to protect the established European- American diasporas. Some of the plans to constrain the mobility and ability of the newcomers to establish themselves in Milwaukee, proved to be oppressive situations for families and children. The starkest outcome for Hispanic and African American families was their confrontation with severe racial and ethnic segregation dictating where they could live, work, worship, or play. The Germans and Polish communities did not accept non-whites, a racist attitude that fostered social inequality for Hispanics and African Americans (Ladson-Billings, 1998). From elected officials on the Common Council, to property owners, and school board members, racism became normalized. The policies and practices at every institutional level used a system where everyone was compared to the white community, a belief that white people are dominant over non-whites. In many ways, the racist actions of the German and Polish communities towards African Americans and Latinos mirrored the reaction of the Germans to the Italians and the Irish a century earlier. A recounting of the discrimination of different immigrant groups in U.S. history, whether they were white settlers to Native Americans, or Germans to the Italians, Polish Americans to Blacks and Hispanics, a common occurrence is the domination of white people over non-white groups and a tolerance that this is a normal progression in society (Delgado, 1995, p. xiv).

The African American and Latin groups formed coalitions in the late 1960s, helping each of their communities, fighting for educational reform, open housing, and fair employment practices. The newer group, Latinos, who began to arrive in greater numbers in the late 1960s, faced some of the same issues as African Americans. Latina women were at the forefront of speaking out on behalf of themselves and their families. The collision of different diasporas meeting in Milwaukee's

south side community set the stage for Hispanic organizing in the years to come, and sparked Latina activism in Milwaukee.

### **The Power of the Polish Machine**

We have to step back in time to understand the development of significance of the south side Polish machine. Milwaukee's urban growth occurred rapidly in the mid-1800s. The influx of traders and settlers, coupled with European migration, transformed and nearly destroyed the vibrant Native American community on the shores of Lake Michigan (Loew, 2013). One of those traders, George H. Walker, became a key figure in land development, turning the land, near south side into the Walker's Point area. In 1864, there were 30 Polish families; by 1880 nearly 3,800 Polish born of Polish descent, by 1902, the number had grown to 58,000 and by 1920, the Polish population in Milwaukee had reached over 90,000 residents (Torres, 2001).

This next section provides an overview of the history and dominance of the Polish enclaves in Milwaukee's south side community, many left Poland in the 1870s and immigrated to Milwaukee in greater numbers because of political oppression. By the 1890s Poles were the second largest immigrant group in Milwaukee (Gurda, 1999, 1974). Through networks of friends and family, the Polish community, learned about affordable housing and employment opportunities in the tanneries, lumber yards, machine shops, breweries, and brickyards, of Milwaukee (Gurda, 1999). The Polish faced many obstacles; they were forced to live in restricted areas close to industrial sites with high levels of pollution, faced with crowded housing, filthy streets, and inadequate water supplies. Their Milwaukee neighborhoods were an "inferior environment compared to the rest of the city" (Leavitt, 1996, p. 17). In the mid to late 1800s, Poles were some of the newest immigrants with little social clout compared to the German community. In contrast, Germans who had arrived earlier, and had established many of the industries, rose to leadership positions in politics, and social circles, with a thriving German commercial district north of Milwaukee's downtown. The prevalence of the

German culture, language, manufacturing and breweries led to Milwaukee being known as the German capital of the United States (Gurda, 1999). The tension between the Polish and German diasporas polarized each community into distinct areas of town.

The Polish American community moved to the southern end of Milwaukee, out of necessity, availability, and affordability. The land on Milwaukee's south side was cheap and plentiful. The Poles created their own residential architectural style, and a vibrant business community. They constructed over 16 churches, and schools, and elected a record number of public leaders of Polish ancestry in the late 1880s (Borun, 1946). This Polish machine would last until the mid-1960s, with a distinct ethnic consciousness based on Polish heritage, replete with groups of artists, musicians, social workers, baseball players, and youth organizations. (Borun, 1946; Pease, 2004; Torres, 2001).

Historian Kathleen Neils-Conzen (1979) stresses that the concentration of immigrant groups' residential patterns can promote negative consequences. The communities can become insular enclaves. These enclaves can lead a 'neighborhood building an ethnic character and it will become less attractive to outsiders' (p. 610). The German community was established with higher concentrations of home ownership, and socioeconomic status, and wanted to distance themselves from lower socio-economic immigrant groups. Each immigrant community chose residential neighborhoods that strengthened their ethnic identity. The different immigrant ethnic groups formed distinct enclaves: The Germans settled on the west side; the Irish were in the Third Ward and were eventually replaced by the Italians. Industries flourished near the Port of Milwaukee, and the Menomonee Valley, other diverse industries grew: Meat packing, tanneries, breweries, flour mills, and iron mills. In all of these industries Polish laborers flourished; they shaped the city's development as many of them bought a small parcel of land, financed their small cottages, lived frugal lifestyles, and ultimately expanded their living space, often creating an adjoining unit for rental income, that came to be known as the "Polish Flat" (Kenny & Hubka, 2009). The Polish flat "is

lifted from its foundations, to create a semi-basement dwelling underneath” (Hubka & Kenny, 2000). The below ground-level units provided rental income until their owners’ mortgage was paid off, or often allowed extended family members to live in the lower units, coalescing families. This type of housing met the needs of the close-knit family units in the Polish community but would also be a huge attraction for the future newcomers in the Latino community.

### **Religious and social organizations in Milwaukee’s *Polonia***

Similar to the German community, the Polish community hoped to maintain their ethnic identity after immigration through the Catholic church and the schools, where the Polish language and culture could be preserved. The concentration of German churches, along with an ‘extensive network of parochial and private-German languages schools led to the Polish community having to create their own places of worship and educational instruction for the children’ (Neils-Conzen, 1979, p. 609). The first Polish Catholic church in Milwaukee was St. Stanislaus Church. Today the twin spires overlook Interstate 94 on the west side of the freeway. We can see the centrality of the church to the Polish community through the growth of Milwaukee Polish churches. Lay leaders raised money for the creation of many churches including: St. Hyacinth, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Josaphat Basilica, St. Cyril and Methodius, St. Casimir, St. Mary of Czestochowa, St. John Kanty, St. Adalbert, St. Barbara Church, Blessed Sacrament Church, St. Alexander Church, St. Helen’s Church, St. Ignatius, St. Mary Magdalen, St. Wenceslaus, St. Anthony, St. Paul, and Holy Name Polish National Catholic Church (Praszalowicz, 1994). Most of these churches had schools attached for the Polish children who were congregants of the church. In some cases, the church might have started out with only one or two classrooms, but eventually raised enough money to build an adjoining school building. These parochial schools were almost exclusively for the neighborhood children. In the formative early 1900s through the 1950s children in those classrooms did not have any exposure to any other children of different races or ethnicities.

When Latin people began to integrate themselves into the churches in the 1960s, some had positive experiences, while others were challenged by trying to fit into the neighborhood. One participant, a Mexican American recalled her teenage age years in the 1960s and shared the following:

Nothing has changed in terms of segregation, we [Latins] were welcomed to live next door to Slovenians, Polish, Germans, it was acceptable. I think it was because they [whites] saw Latinos with the same traits as hardworking, religious, family values, they saw similarities. It could have been because we prayed at the same churches, we [Latins] were accepted (Paulina, Interview, 2015).

It is impossible to paint with a broad brush, saying that all European Americans accepted, or did not accept, each other. Paulina's recollection of how her mother's Slovenian friend accepted her could have been because they shared similar religious practices, similar beliefs about modest appearance in public, and both spoke foreign languages. It is difficult to know what extent religion, gender, and race influenced tolerance and acceptance. European American acceptance of Latin neighbors demonstrates the racialized space of the near south side. In some Latin circles, some people believed they shared similar distinguishable traits of being hardworking and faith-based individuals with strong families with European Americans. Later in this chapter, I will say more about how the same statement can be analyzed or interpreted from a racial lens, and how these sentiments from the south side white community supported restricted housing.

In the same neighborhood, Dalia, a Polish American, recalled how her Polish born grandparents staunchly believed in assimilation and rejected building a balanced interethnic and interracial community with Latins. Dalia shared:

The big issue was to accept the Mexicans into the area and into the church. We were supposed to learn Spanish to be more accepting and 'my *boosha* (grandmother in Polish) always said when you come to America, you learn English and learn to become 'American.' This was time when Latins were moving in and there was a lot of tension (Daniela, Interview, 2015).



It seemed that Dalia learned from her '*boosha*' a lower level of acceptance toward the Latino newcomers. Dalia was taught that these new immigrants needed to assimilate, embrace the American culture, learn the English language and eradicate all cultural practices from their homelands. In contrast, for the Latin community to survive in the United States, they needed to create social networks that preserved their language, and customs, and foster solidarity with other like-minded individuals who could help them provide ongoing support systems in their lives (Sánchez Korrol, 1994). As Latins built alliances, this created insecurities for the Polish community.

Again, in a relatively defined geographic area, the variability of sentiments within the European-American diaspora was not a unified front. The Slovenian elder was more accepting, whereas Dalia's grandparents resisted the Latin newcomers who relocated from Texas, Puerto Rico, Mexico, and other Spanish-speaking countries. Why was there a major difference between two elder women from European-American countries? My opinion relates to ethnic identity, and how the Slovenian elder, a recent immigrant who spoke no English, could empathize with the Latino community who spoke limited English. Dalia's grandmother's ideology on immigration and assimilation was that the more American you are, the better.

Similar to their religious institutions, the Polish community worked on social causes to meet specific needs in their community. The Poles organized an overwhelming number of charities, societies, and nonprofit organizations to meet the needs of women, veterans, musicians, artists, writers, homeowners, sporting clubs, newspapermen's club, national alliance clubs, and countless other groups. Each organized group espoused carrying forward the ideals, values, and traditions from Poland (Borun, 1946).

Membership in the different groups allowed persons of Polish descent to join well-known clubs and organizations aimed at preserving Polish cultural identity through an abundance of programs in the community. For instance, the Polish Old Settlers Club, The Polish Army Veterans

Association, and Polish Falcons were just a few associations created for persons of Polish descent. In each of these organizations, the leadership included men and women of Polish ancestry. Nonprofit Polish American organizations provided opportunities for individuals to gain leadership skills, but also provided opportunities for fellow countrymen and women with Polish ancestry to volunteer in different causes (Borun, 1946). It was only natural that the Polish newcomers advocated for the same level and types of organizations in their respective communities.

Not only did the Polish community unite for spiritual, charitable, and social causes, but they began to see their own capacity in entrepreneurial endeavors. Milwaukee's 'Polish Grand Avenue' refers to the vibrant retail and entertainment district on Mitchell Street, which rivaled Milwaukee's downtown commercial district. This strongest retail corridor in the City of Milwaukee led to economic development efforts and municipal policy decisions demonstrating the power and influence of leaders in the Polish American community (Why Shoppers Jam Mitchell Street Sales, 1958). The next section describes the impact of Milwaukee's retail district – the 'Polish Grand Avenue.'

### **Economic, political, and social power in Milwaukee's *Polonia***

By 1930, Mitchell Street was a central neighborhood business district, and a beacon of success for the Polish community and the City of Milwaukee. Polish immigrants and their descendants identified the needs of their community and attracted a diverse number of business owners from 1<sup>st</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> Street on Mitchell Street. No longer were residents in Milwaukee shopping at the Grand Avenue in downtown Milwaukee; they were flocking to Mitchell Street. Residents could find grocers, specialty shops, restaurants, lawyers, clothing and shoe stores, physicians' offices, and movie theaters; this commercial hub created what was to become the downtown of the south side or the 'Polish Grand Avenue' (Torres, 2001). A comprehensive list of all types of businesses examined at the parcel level from S. 5th to S. 12th Street on Mitchell Street is shown in Table 4.1.

### Economic stability - the Polish Grand Avenue

In the 1950s, every weekend thousands of parishioners would attend mass either at St. Stanislaus on 6<sup>th</sup> street or on 9<sup>th</sup> street at St. Anthony's church on Mitchell Street and patronize the many businesses after church services (Torres, 2001). The strength of Mitchell Street's commercial district is evident in, that by 1958, fifteen bus lines served the area. Few areas outside of downtown Milwaukee provided this type of transportation service to customers (Why Shoppers Jam Mitchell Street Sales, 1958).

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Table 4.1. Number and types of businesses on Mitchell Street, 1930-1970

Type of Business	1930	1950	1970
Professional Services	72	59	29
Government	1	2	4
Vacant	7	5	27
Retail Food	13	11	5
Restaurants	7	5	5
Theaters	5	5	2
Department Stores	6	7	4
Financial Services	21	24	15
Nonprofit Agency	3	2	6
Specialty Shops	97	100	80
<b>Total</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>220</b>	<b>177</b>

(Torres, 2001)

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The proximity of the residents to the commercial district allowed for the Polish American community to flourish (Wright Directories, 1930; 1950; 1970). The "Polish Grand Avenue" was a major success between 1930-1950 because they had a comprehensive mixed-use development plan for the area. The number of professional services in 1930 included accounting, law, real estate, life and homeowner's insurance, physicians, and pharmacists (see Table 4.1). On the retail side, there were men's and women's specialty shops, hat stores, cigar shops, flower shops, candy stores, shoe

stores, and wedding shops. Not only did the Polish Grand Avenue have retail and professional services, but they had full-scale department stores. Prior to 1945, there were three major department stores located on Mitchell Street: Gimbel's, Sears Roebuck and Co., and JC Penney's. In addition, there was an entertainment district with theaters, taverns, and restaurants. By 1970, the commercial district began to show signs of decline with over 55 businesses closing since 1930 providing an opening of spaces for Latin businesses (Torres, 2001).

An article in the *Milwaukee Sentinel* titled, "Why Shoppers Jam Mitchell Street Sales," explained how the diversity in department, specialty, and variety stores attracted shoppers from all parts of the greater Milwaukee area (1958). While the south side had a vibrant commercial district, Black people in Milwaukee knew it was a place where Blacks were not welcome all the time. One of the interview participants, an African- American was a first year student at private high school in the 1960s recalled the racist and discriminatory actions when he shopped on the south side:

I went to the JC Penney store looking for Black pants and a white shirt. I was told I could not try on the clothes and they called security on me. I never went back to J.C. Penney's, I ended up going to Goodwill (Adam, Interview, 2015).

Adam recalled the racist treatment by a store clerk. I argue that Adam learned the south side was not a safe place during day or night, and was categorized against because of his race, gender, and age. An inconsequential trip to a department store for his school uniform damaged any notion of positive interracial relations between Milwaukee's Polish community and African American community for Adam. These same sentiments of fear, or panic, towards the Black community would be on display when the Open Housing marches moved to Milwaukee's south side. It was not only African Americans who were treated poorly because of their skin color, it also occurred with Mexican-looking individuals. Brian, a European American recalled the following incident at a bar on the south side:

I was working part-time at an upscale bar on 6<sup>th</sup> and Rogers Street. An obvious looking Mexican guy came walking in the door. He had pitch black hair, brown eyes, a yellow embroidered shirt and white Levi jeans. I was tending bar and the owner was at the far end of the bar holding court. He sat down and spoke to me in Spanish. I did not understand. The owner pulls me over and says, “If that guy doesn’t know how to speak English than throw his ass out of here” and I said, “You’re the boss, if you want me to throw his ass out than I am leaving with him.” The boss said, “ok, but if anything goes wrong, he is your responsibility” (Brian, Interview, 2016).

The racist interethnic and interracial practices of some business owners and their workers were attempts to keep Black and Brown people away from well-known white Polish American neighborhoods. In the above exchange, the Mexican man is judged by the owner of the restaurant because of his bright clothing, his phenotype, and assumed inability to speak English. Brian explained in the interview that he was more sympathetic to the newcomer because he was first generation to Milwaukee. Brian recalled his father’s stories of being mistreated by the Germans when his father arrived from Ukraine. In both scenarios, the African American male and the Latin male experienced discriminatory and racist practices because of their race and ethnicity in a local department store and a local tavern. Despite the difference in the size of the business, from JCPenney’s with stores throughout the U.S.A., to a locally owned tavern, the discriminatory and racist practices prevailed against African Americans and Latins. Eventually, this relentless interaction from business owners led to mistrust and severed relations between the mainstream Polish American community and the African American and Latino communities.

The treatment of the Poles in the late 1880s is remarkably similar to the Latino newcomers in the 1970s. Each community faced challenges of finding adequate housing, securing jobs, and learning the English language, while negotiating their place with another dominant culture. The Polish community desired to maintain their own cultural identity when the Germans were the majority; and Latins and African Americans attempted to preserve their identity behind the Polish domination and influence (Leavitt, 1996; Gurda, 2013).

Further, I will analyze how the economic stronghold on the south side impacted community relations, especially with the policies of local government in Milwaukee. The political wherewithal of public officials and other leaders of Polish descent led to compromised interethnic and interracial relations between Polish Americans and diverse communities.

### **Political power and alliances shape employment and law enforcement practices**

Since 1923, the tensions between Latinos and the European community have been narrated as the newcomers were competitors in the workplace, in the places of worship, and for affordable housing options in the same neighborhoods (Where Mexico Has Invaded Milwaukee, 1927). Unbeknownst to the Spanish-speaking arrivals, who were recruited to work in a variety of Milwaukee industries, and arrived in Milwaukee with a willingness to work, they would face being viewed as strike breakers by European Americans (González, 2016). The financial impact on European American workers led to Poles and Germans aligning themselves in labor-based disputes.

Historian Eric Fure-Slocum (2009) describes how the Polish and German laborers influenced the political process: They created alliances and built strong networks to influence the political landscape (p. 54). Similar feelings were voiced about Black workers who were often paid less than their white counterpart. They also faced non-inclusion in the labor unions, or denial of higher position jobs. John Trotter's seminal research in *Black Milwaukee: The Making of an Industrial Proletariat, 1915-45* shows how opposition from the white community led African Americans to build their own community and form a Black middle class (1985). Although some alliances existed between the Black and Latin communities about issues like fair and open housing, employment opportunities, and access to quality schools, this sentiment was not felt by all members in the Latin community. In particular one of the Latinas, Paulina - who grew up in a middle-income Mexican-American family – recalled conversations about the lack of integration and the beginnings of the European- American community perceiving to lose their superiority:

Unfortunately, the Polish saw African Americans as a threat. There were Blacks, Latinos and Poles in the foundries and tanneries but there was no integration (Paulina, Interview, 2015).

The description of a diverse workforce shows a strong economy with Blacks, Latins, and Polish Americans working in some of the same industrial sites. Although the foundries and tanneries were all located in the central part of the city, the Menomonee Valley (the area between the north and south sides of Milwaukee), the workers did not socialize with each other. Paulina's comment on how the Polish saw African Americans as a threat begs the question of whether Latins saw African Americans as a threat. If a Latin person had a European-American friend, neighbor, or fellow congregant they might have talked and built alliances because they were of a higher socio-economic class than other Latinos in the neighborhood. Likewise, there were some Latins who empathized with African Americans and saw the European-American, or mainstream community as the threat. This was a microcosm of what was happening throughout Milwaukee, in every aspect of life, from the classroom, to the church, and in the park, little interaction between racial and ethnic groups.

Next, I will analyze how the practices and policy of Milwaukee's police department created adversarial relations between the existing European-American diaspora and the African American and Hispanic communities. Milwaukee's Chief of Police, Harold Breier, was of Polish descent, an appointed official with a loyal following from the Polish American community, who used race/racial ideology/racialization/skin color to decide who was law-abiding and who was not. The policies set forth by Chief Harold Breier did not build relations between the Polish, Latins and African American communities.

### **Law enforcement power – the Breier way**

In 1964 Chief Harold Breier operated the Milwaukee Police Department with unlimited authority within the and insensitivity to the concerns of the non-white community (Woliver, 1990).

Throughout Chief Breier's tenure, he was accused of permitting excessive force with minorities and some young people. These sentiments were widespread, and the hopes to 'fire and retire' the chief of police, was a campaign slogan against Chief Harold Breier from African Americans and Latinos. While frustration existed in communities of color, Chief Harold Breier's fellow south siders saw things from an entirely different perspective. Chief Breier lived his entire life on the near south side. By all accounts he was a doting husband and father at home but was known very differently by Latino and African American communities (Snyder & Gordon, 2002).

In Ronald H. Snyder's scholarship, we learn about the 'Chief for Life' and his tremendous support from Milwaukee's Polish community: "Breier enjoyed enormous support in the (Polish) community, especially among ethnic working-class whites largely concentrated on the city's south side. His supporters credited him with making Milwaukee 'the most crime free' city of its size in the United States. They applauded his characterization of his supporters as 'the good people of Milwaukee (who) buy what we are selling' and his opponents as 'malcontents, ultra-liberals and special interest groups'" (2002, p. 6). Snyder's research revealing the opinions of south siders demonstrates how the white community is depicted as a strong, hardworking community, fully supportive of Chief Breier, and likewise Chief Breier credits white people as good people. Although Chief Breier does not say Black or Brown people, he uses code words of "malcontents, ultra-liberals and special interest groups" tagging Latinos and Blacks as a special interest group, as bad people. The lack of interethnic and interracial collaboration from the chief of police to all residents, especially diverse groups, created a level of distrust between whites and communities of color. Not only did Blacks and Latinos have difficulty joining the Milwaukee Police Department, but the police were known to arrest, harass, and give young people of color a warrant without cause. Relations were strained outside of the Milwaukee Police Department, and organizational mandatory height restrictions unfairly targeted Latinos and women.



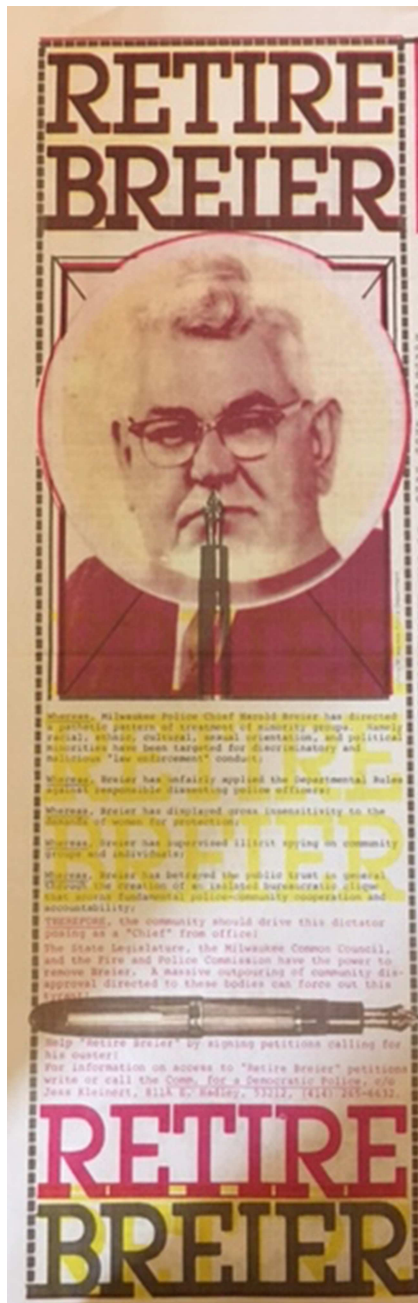
Moreover, gender diversity was absent on the police force because of systemic sexism within the department. Isabel shared how women were required to meet gender-based requirements; women could only be 24 to 34 years of age to join the force, temporally suited, and could not have children under 14 years (Isabel, Interview, 2015). Not having cultural or gender diversity in one of the most powerful public organizations discouraged building cohesive interethnic and interracial relations between the Polish community, Latins and African Americans.

Blacks and Latin communities were frustrated and tired of the treatment on the street, along with the policies within the police department. In the 1960s and 1970s, there was a general sense that it was whites against communities of color (Raquel, Interview, 2016; Eduardo, Interview, 2015). The power of the police department in the dominant Polish community created an untenable situation for Latins and African Americans. In many ways, the unfair treatment galvanized each community to develop campaigns to oust the chief of police. Interview participants shared comments about the destructive relationship between Chief Breier and the Latin and African American communities. Eduardo, an outspoken Chicano, was in his 20s in the 1960s, and spoke out about the racist and discriminatory actions of local government. According to Eduardo:

We had the same issues of the north side and Black people so we met with Groppi to come to an understanding about the issue of police. We made a list of things that they could support, we defined a combination of how we could support each other (Eduardo, Interview, 2016).

Eduardo realized that communities of color faced similar issues of police brutality and discrimination, so they formed a coalition to “Retire Breier.” It was not a north side issue only affecting Blacks but it was a south side issue affecting Latins. The Committee for a Democratic Police created the flyer to share their opinion about the chief’s abuse of power (see Figure 4.2). This newspaper advertisement in *La Guardia* newspaper declares Police Chief Breier as enemy number one to communities of color and accuses him and the Milwaukee Police Department of

discrimination and racist tactics. The small, unreadable, print beneath the picture is reprinted to the side of the image.



Whereas, Milwaukee Police Chief Harold Breier has directed a pathetic pattern of treatment of minority groups. Namely racial, ethnic, cultural, sexual orientation and political minorities have been targeted for discriminatory and malicious "law enforcement" conduct;

Whereas, Breier has unfairly applied the Departmental Rules against responsible dissenting police officers;

Whereas, Breier has displayed gross insensitivity to the demands of women for protection.

Whereas, Breier has supervised illicit spying on community groups and individuals;

Whereas, Breier has betrayed the public trust in general thought the creation of an isolated bureaucratic clique that scorns fundamental police-community cooperation and accountability;

THEREFORE, the community should drive this dictator posing as a "Chief" from office!

The State Legislature, the Milwaukee Common Council, and the Fire and Police Commission have the power to remove Breier. A massive outpouring of community disapproval directed to these bodies can force out this tyrant!

Help "Retire Breier by signing petitions

Figure 4.2 Advertisement against Police Chief Breier (Committee for a Democratic Police, 1970s).

The Committee for a Democratic Police placed ads (see Figure 4.2) in the *La Guardia* newspaper, not backing down from their allegations. In many ways, this campaign backfired, inspiring the

mainstream community to fully support the chief of police. I could only imagine how these inflammatory remarks about Chief Breier built a wall between the major groups in Milwaukee.

### **Polish American White Flight**

The south side of Milwaukee changed dramatically in both population and physical appearance with the construction of Interstate 94. President Dwight Eisenhower signed the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1956, creating a national grid of interstate and defense highways (84th Congress). Interstate 94 dramatically changed the way of life for the Polish American community. The once vibrant *Polonia* faced demolition of homes on the eastern border of Interstate 94. The construction of Interstate 94 was a barrier to Milwaukee's *Polonia*. No longer was this a walkable community, now it catered to vehicles. Nearby streets were widened to allow for greater automobile traffic and by the power of eminent domain, single family and duplex homes were demolished. In addition, the Common Council of Milwaukee erroneously thought that by creating parking lots behind the commercial districts, further demolishing homes, the commercial corridor could remain vibrant and sustainable (Torres, 2001).

The Polish Grand Avenue never recovered, and elected leaders set policy favoring vehicular traffic over pedestrian- friendly zones. As shown in Table 4.1, it is evident that the Mitchell Street of the 1950s lost its economic influence and power. The interstate increased ease and access of transportation for Milwaukee residents. Not only did the interstate allow residents to enter the city, the growth of suburban communities encouraged and invited many in the white community to settle down in idyllic suburban settings. As the Polish community moved out of the neighborhood, many new residents and immigrants moved to Milwaukee, particularly members of the African American and the Latin community. The demolition of homes and businesses on the eastern edge of Mitchell Street permanently changed the landscape of the Polish community. Brian, the son of European

immigrants, remembered the dramatic shifts in populations in the 1960s and 1970s (see Table 2.1).

Brian recalled:

The neighborhood was becoming fragmented, it was an opportunity to escape. The whites fled to Franklin, Oak Creek, Mukwonago (Brian, Interview, 2016).

For over one hundred years, Polish Americans had created a strong working-class neighborhood supporting businesses, churches, and schools catering to their ethnic group. Brian's statement depicts the neighborhood as becoming more diverse and not as cohesive.

Suburbanization was the perfect opportunity to alleviate the tensions of interethnic and interracial relations in Milwaukee's *Polonia*. As the larger Hispanic immigrant community began to move into the neighborhood, their children attended local schools. Spanish-speaking parents requested services, and a strong alliance was formed among Latinos from a diverse group of countries. This combination proved insurmountable for the Polish Americans, and many left the community.

### **Polish American exodus and increase of Latin and African American population**

The rapid urbanization of small mid-sized cities in the Great Lakes region occurred because of industrial and manufacturing opportunities of the 1940s. The growth of business attracted thousands of people from farmlands to cities; the shift from an agrarian society to an industrial one, happened with the increase of technology and the need for large-scale production. Blacks believed that racism, prejudice, and discrimination would be improved in the northern states.

In 1940, the Midwestern cities of Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit had a nearly ten percent Black populations. Milwaukee's Black population numbered only about 10,000 or one percent in 1940. The Black population increases to slightly over three percent in 1950, and to eight percent in 1960, and slightly over 100,000 or fifteen percent by 1970 (U.S. Census Bureau, 1940-1970). Examining the correlation of poverty in Black America caused many scholars to write about the "ghettos of cities" from New York, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, and Oakland (Kusmer, 1995;

Hirsch, 2009; Sugrue, 2014; Massey & Denton, 1993) implying that urban city decline was directly correlated with the increased African American population (Wilson, 2012).

Historian Joe William Trotter Jr. (1985) critiqued the viewpoints of scholars who only mentioned African Americans together with the Black ghetto. Trotter provided empirical research on Milwaukee's Black middle class from 1910 to 1945. The growth, promise, and hope of Milwaukee's Black middle class did not occur until the mid-1940s, but then dramatically shifted by 1970. Throughout the United States in the 1900s, cities and suburbs developed policies to keep Black people from moving into white residential districts. Milwaukee was no different. Not only did Milwaukee have race- restrictive covenants, but 16 out of 18 suburbs of Milwaukee County excluded Blacks. The African American community moved into the near north area, a neighborhood previously settled by German-Americans, and subsequently followed by the Jewish community. Both the Jewish and German community moved northwest allowing African Americans to move into the area. As African Americans gained economic success, and a desire to move out and purchase a home, they found themselves being discriminated against by the passing of local and federal policies restricting their free movement. The decades of the 1940s and 1950s experienced the largest Black migration to Milwaukee and coincided with the unprecedented growth in the Latino community (Gieb, 1998).

By the 1960s, Latino migrant workers were travelling to the Great Lakes Region for seasonal agricultural work, harvesting apples, cherries, cucumbers, and other vegetables. After several years of making the transnational migration from the Southwest to the Midwest, thousands decided to relocate and settle in Milwaukee, Wisconsin (Rodriguez, M., 2011; Rodriguez & Sava, 2006). As Polish Americans moved into areas southwest of *Polonia*, and into inner-ring suburbs of Milwaukee, the Latin community moved into the "Polish flats" partly because of affordability, but mainly because of the extreme segregation in the City of Milwaukee. A small enclave of Puerto Ricans

created a community in the Riverwest area, and Mexicans settled south of the Menomonee Valley. At the time, African Americans lived in a restricted zone of Milwaukee's north side. One of the participants, Nicole, a Mexican American in her 20s, mentioned:

In the 1970s the area was predominantly Polish and white, a working-class community, the Hispanics were just beginning to develop and assert themselves (Nicole, Interview, 2015).

In my interview with Nicole, I learned that she learned at a young age the differences between the privileges of being white, how many of the Polish-Americans lived in stable housing, and worked in family-supporting jobs. Not only did she recognize the dominance of the Polish community but she also saw the hopes and dreams of the Latin newcomers who wanted to improve their lives, purchase homes and find well-paying jobs.

### **Milwaukee's Latino community**

The first wave of Latinos or "*los primeros*" (the first ones) came to Milwaukee in the 1920s (Rodriguez & Sava, 2006). This first phase attracted mostly men working in local industries, railroads, and agricultural fields. Many Latinos were attracted to the near south side because the first ones who arrived slowly began to establish a presence with pool halls, grocery stores, taverns, and social groups scattered throughout the neighborhood. Milwaukee's Latino population escalated in the 1960s in part because of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965, which focused on immigrants' skills and family relationships with citizens and changed the settlement patterns of immigrants to the U.S (Massey, 1995). Eventually many of them found full-time work in local tanneries, foundries, and other manufacturing sites. In many ways, Latinos were attracted to Milwaukee because of strong cultural connections to family/friend networks, employment opportunities, and affordable housing (Rodriguez, M., 2011; Millard et. al, 2004; Vargas, Z., 1993; Valdés, 2005).

Just as the Polish, German, and African American communities created a presence, Latinos envisioned entrepreneurial opportunities for their growing community. Small businesses catering to Milwaukee's Latino community were evident from the number of quarter- page advertisements in a locally run grassroots bilingual Spanish newspaper, *La Guardia*. From restaurants to taverns, a glimpse of the number of small businesses included advertisements placed in *La Guardia* including: Acapulco Mexican Foods, Alamo Bar, Texas II Restaurant, Topitzes Grocery, Club De La Rosa, Juana Diaz Tap, La Fonda Restaurant, and Mi-Lupitas Dance Lounge ("Cinco Arrestados en Protesta Contra DCD", 1973). These ventures demonstrate the ability of Latino men and women to create the beginning of a prosperous commercial district. As mentioned earlier, it was the unfair treatment by well-established white owned businesses that motivated Latinos to start their small businesses. The small business community that began in the 1970s flourished in the 1980s, with Latinos starting their own businesses as disc jockeys, bakers, franchise owners, restaurant operators, tavern owners, authors, and childcare providers (Garza, M., 1987).

The visibility of Milwaukee's Latino community continued in every aspect, but especially for families and children in the public and private school systems. It was in the classroom and on the playground where parents and children experienced being invisible, ignored, and discriminated against in the early 1970s. Antonia, a young Puerto Rican who was learning the customs and traditions of the U.S. found a lack of support from the school administration. Claudia, a young woman in her 20s who claimed both her Puerto Rican and Mexican identity could understand the situations of each community. Raquel, a bilingual graduate of South Division High School in 1971 recalled her childhood experiences of gathering cucumbers on Wisconsin farms, she knew firsthand the issues of migrant farmworkers and their children.

Antonia who was born in Puerto Rico and arrived in Milwaukee during her elementary years and Raquel, a Mexican American both had similar experiences of the hostile school environment

regardless of place of nativity. These Latinas talked about the culture in Milwaukee Public Schools and how they themselves and classmates learned that they were different than the mainstream community; the following are some comments from my interviews:

We were not encouraged to participate in sports or clubs, and the guidance counselor did not help put us on the right track, a big distinction from the white kids (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

Many kids came from migrant families, the kids did not want to go school, the parents allowed the kids to stay home and no one from the school would check up on the kids. We were a group not being noticed (Claudia, Interview, 2016).

I was 19 years old, working as a teacher's aide and the parents always complained to me that there was no bilingual staff in the school (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

Antonia, Claudia and Raquel each had distinct nationalities but they all encountered similar patterns of discrimination in the school setting in the late 1960s. Whether a child was not counseled in the guidance office, or the administration failed to notice that migrant students were missing from the classroom, parents and families were treated as an inferior class through the lack of attention from some teachers and administrators. As they reached their adolescent years, some children rebelled and felt they were pushed out of the school system. More will be elaborated on this topic in another chapter when I share the reasons for the formation of the *Centro Cultural Educativo – Chicano and Boricua* School.

The impact of Latinos establishing roots in the close-knit neighborhood, resulted in Latinos visiting churches, hoping the priest or religious women could meet their spiritual and religious formation duties, for themselves and their children. When Latinos realized that they needed clergy to speak their language, or they needed to have representation on the Parish Council or share their interest in being visible and present at parish festivals, is when discontent and clashes began between the Poles and Latinos. The undertone of Parish Council members in the early 1970s was one of



losing control of their parish; they were the ones who raised the money, recruited members, built strong schools, and guided the formation of children and families, and now would be losing power with the increased Latino population.

Furthermore, the presence of Latinos in the neighborhood arose from their need to find adequate housing for their families. Spanish-speaking individuals who had lived temporarily in small towns and villages in Central and Northern Wisconsin decided to call Milwaukee's *Polonia* their new home. For the Polish community, the growth of the Latino population was quick and overwhelming. Latinos had minimal housing options, and often multiple families shared an apartment, frequently facing rodent problems, unsanitary plumbing conditions, furnaces that did not work in the winter, and absentee landlords who did not resolve such issues in the apartments (Claudia, 2015).

When the Polish community first established itself in Milwaukee, they chose the underdeveloped area of the south side because other ethnic groups had already claimed the east, west, and north sides of Milwaukee (Leavitt, 1996). The Poles had some choice of where to establish their community. It was not the most welcoming experience, but in many ways the Poles, a close-knit working-class community, created space for themselves. Latinos and African Americans were the recent arrivals with thousands of individuals in each community who attempted to find homes in Milwaukee's north and south sides. The subsequent segregation, which emerged due to white people refusing to live next to Black and Brown people, led to the civil rights insurgency in Milwaukee.

### **Common prejudicial and discriminatory practices**

Racially restrictive covenants attached to deeds of housing allowed financial institutions and home insurance companies to deny home ownership opportunities to Blacks, and later to Latinos, in Milwaukee. The banks used a process of "redlining" on the map of Milwaukee, thereby designating

differentiated zones of living. The red areas were known as “dangerous” areas with poor people, high crime, and unfavorable for investment by financial institutions. In Milwaukee, African Americans lived in the red zone of this map. Once Milwaukee’s Black population reached nearly 100,000, community organizers developed campaigns for Open Housing legislation, protesting the discrimination of housing based on race. In 1956, Vel Phillips became the first African American woman to join Milwaukee’s Common Council. In 1962, Alderwoman Phillips proposed a Fair Housing Law, only to be turned down by her colleagues for five consecutive years (Jones, 2009).

In 1967, the frustration and desperation of the African American community led to the Open Housing marches, and they were met by white counter protestors (2009). For over two hundred nights, protests were led by Fr. Groppi and the Youth Commandos, who marched from Milwaukee’s Black neighborhoods to the Polish American community on the south side. As Blacks crossed the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Viaduct Bridge they encountered a mob of angry white protestors who feared that Blacks were moving into “their” side of town. They threw objects at them, shouted profanities, held up offensive signs, and sent hate mail to lead organizers. In addition, white residents used their political influence with local public officials asking them not to support Open Housing legislation (2009).

The Civil Rights movement gained momentum after Martin Luther King marched and spoke across the country advocating for the end of discrimination against African Americans. The Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibited the discrimination on race, color, sex, color, religion, sex, or national origin in terms of employment, voting, or in public places. It was not until Martin Luther King’s assassination that President Lyndon B. Johnson passed the Fair Housing Act of 1968 (Dougherty, 2004). In the 1960s, at the height of the Civil Rights movement, one of the participants who was born and raised in Texas, identified himself as a Chicano recalled how poor and working-class

Blacks and Latinos faced oppressive policy and practice by slum landlords on the north and south sides of the city. Eduardo, the Chicano activist mentioned above, recalled:

Housing was a big problem on the north side, we decided to form a coalition because we had the same issues, absentee landlords, poor housing conditions, housing structures were deteriorating, and landlords discriminated against us. In the Black community, white owners did not want to rent to Blacks with large families or single women or men. The same discrimination happened on the south side. There were places in Walker's Point, where people would not rent to Latinos because they had big families or they thought they did not have good jobs and could not pay rent. This is when we formed a coalition (Eduardo, Interview, 2016).

In many ways, Blacks and Latinos shared experiences of similarly oppressive actions by landlords, regardless of geography, which were a catalyst for a coalition. In the 1960s and 1970s, homeownership was dominated by Germans on the north side, and Poles on the south side. On the other hand, Eduardo's testimony shows how deeply entrenched thoughts about race and class prevailed between home owners and renters. Having no previous knowledge of the applicant, sometimes a landlord made rampant and racist judgements about individuals based on their race, ethnicity and family size, inextricably linking them to the inability to pay for household expenses.

One of the Latina activists recalled how she would visit homes to tutor school aged children but would be exposed to dreadful housing situations for Latino families. Claudia's initial visit aimed at improving a child's academic performance shifted to addressing unhealthy and unsafe living conditions for families. One of the participants identified with a dual nationality of her Puerto Rican mother and Mexican father and always felt comfortable with any person of Spanish speaking descent. In one of her visits in the early 1970s, Claudia, a young Latina mother herself at the time, shared:

I went to the homes of the children to provide tutoring. One day the mom asked me to follow her into the bathroom, she showed me a leak in the faucet, and how overnight the tub was frozen with water, they could not take a bath, they could not drink the water from the kitchen faucet and the landlord would not respond to them (Claudia, Interview, 2016).

Claudia observed the disinvestment and blight of rental properties when she visited the homes and the impact on families with young children. Claudia recalled seeing frozen water in tub, the water was not properly draining, and the house had no heat during the winter. Many families were living in substandard housing conditions; some homes lacked heat or adequate plumbing. Claudia understood that these lower income families lacked a network, the English language, and education to fight wealthy, European-American landlords. As Eduardo mentioned, activists and community members from the Black and Latin communities joined forces and fought for housing rights throughout the City of Milwaukee. Once the campaign for Open Housing began in 1962 by Alderwoman Vel Phillips, and the Polish community reaction in the Common Council, and in the neighborhood, streets became clear, a systematic revolt took place demanding civil rights.

### **Influence of Civil Rights Advocacy Within Latin Community**

As Black identity consciousness grew in Milwaukee and across the United States, Latinos, who were newcomers, also mobilized and realized the benefits of speaking out on issues important to families. A distinguishing characteristic for Milwaukee's Latin community is that they lived in the neighborhood next to the angry and racist protestors who shouted obscenities, hurled rocks, bottles, and profanity at the people in the Open Housing marches (Jones, 2009). While some Latinos were involved in the marches, many of the young Latina activists, were in high school and had to obey their parents and thus were not allowed to participate, even though they supported Blacks in their quest for justice. It is important to remember that many of the young Latina activists were younger than 18 years of age, lived with their parents and had to obey the rules of their mother and father. Many Latinas became emotional recollecting memories of those turbulent times of open housing and how their parents feared for their daughters' safety and would not let them participate. Antonia, a Latina who was about 20 years old at the time, shared:

Most Latinos were not involved. I remember being a spectator, I remember crying because they were throwing things at them, it was very ugly. I was angry (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

Antonia's described being outraged, witnessing Blacks being treated in disgraceful and hostile manners. In my interview with Antonia, she remembered feeling helpless but wanted to support the protests but she was not given permission by her parents. Antonia had a similar experience of witnessing the marches on the south side when she was walking to work from 11<sup>th</sup> and National to 5<sup>th</sup> and Walker Street, the heart of Milwaukee's Latino community. Antonia's family was very protective over her because they had been in Milwaukee less than ten years by the early 1970s and did not want Antonia involved in rebel or "bad" behavior. Antonia described:

I am walking but everything was so quiet. I got to my friend Rosa's house and she asked, "What are you doing here? There is a curfew you're not supposed to be out. The Blacks are rioting.' Soon after my mom dragged me home. There was no Latino organized support in the beginning, later we supported Fr. Groppi and went to the meeting at St. Michael's (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

The emotional attachment when individuals are engaged or not allowed to engage created solidarity between individuals fighting for justice (Sziarto & Leitner, 2010). In this case, Antonia and Raquel had to follow cultural traditions but they both felt the sentiments of their families were old-fashioned and did not agree with each of their personal interests. For many young Latina activists they understood the strong cultural traditions in the Hispanic culture but were growing up in a different time and place than their parents and they wanted to be active in creating positive change in the community.

In both Raquel's and Antonia's descriptions the two young Latina activists who were in their formative years of ethnic identity consciousness in the early 1970s, were forbidden from participating because of gender- conforming roles within the Latin culture. There were different generational aspects within families; some Latino parents who recently arrived from Puerto Rico,

Mexico, Colombia, or El Salvador, might not have seen the Open Housing marches as their issues. For some Latinos, the conditions were not as bad; some identified or had the ability of fluctuating as “white,” and this explains why they were accepted more than Blacks (Espinoza, 2011). A level of tolerance had been established in neighborhoods, schools, and churches. As noted in some of the interview, some of the Latinas interviewed shared how Polish Americans could accept Latinos because they had same religious practices, strong family backgrounds, and were immigrants (Paulina, Interview, 2016). The visibility and invisibility of race undermined the trust between both communities and intensified a schism between both the Black, white, and Latino communities, who could identify as non-white, white, Latino or Black.

The racialized divisions in Milwaukee were highlighted during the Open Housing marches, the desegregation of Milwaukee Public Schools, and United Farmworker campaigns. Each one of these campaigns highlighted collisions of diasporas between Black and white, Latino and white, and raised questions about solidarity between African Americans and Latinos. Not only were there divisions between the different races and ethnic groups, but even within each ethnic group, there was no homogenous attitude about the issues. Adam, an African American male, did not believe in the non-violence movement and believed that Hispanics had only established roots on Milwaukee’s south side after Blacks fought for those rights. Adam stated:

You didn’t have Hispanics yet on the south side before the Open Housing marches. I did not participate in the Open Housing marches because if you spit or hit me then we got a problem. I am going to hit back. I supported the cause but would not support the non-violence movement, I am not that person. I would go to rallies, give dollars but I would not walk across the 16<sup>th</sup> Street Viaduct and have people spit on me (Adam, Interview, 2015).

The interethnic and interracial dynamics that ensued were chaotic, dysfunctional but with moments of success. How was it that once Fr. Groppi, a white charismatic priest, no longer took

the lead in the Open Housing legislation that all communication stopped? Eduardo, a Chicano in his 20s during the open housing marches, remembered:

Once Fr. Groppi was gone, there was no communication between north and south sides. Very little communication. Things come to an end, the relationship came to an end (Eduardo, Interview, 2016).

Each one of these issues had race, class, and ethnicity at the center of equality issues. In the Milwaukee Open Housing marches, a white priest fought for the rights of African Americans; the desegregation efforts were led by Lloyd Barbee, an African American lawyer in a predominantly Anglo- controlled school district; and the rights for farmworkers in Wisconsin, and the nation, were led by Cesar Chavez, a Chicano from Texas who fought for fair wages and quality of life issues against white farmers. In each one of these campaigns, the interethnic and interracial relations were challenged, negotiated, and compromised.

In some respects, Adam is right: African American activism inspired many diverse ethnic groups to fight for equal rights and privileges. However, to say that Latinos only moved to the south side after the Open Housing is inaccurate. Adam's overall perspective relates to the Black-White binary paradigm, specifically how Blacks were at the forefront of fighting injustice in open housing, and how Latinos would not have the privileges of open housing had it not been for their efforts. Indeed, much is owed to the activists of the Open Housing marches for standing up to structures of segregation and discrimination. Nevertheless, Latinos had been living on the south side in the 1950s and 1960s, increasing their presence after Open Housing legislation and fighting for improved housing conditions. In my conversation with Adam, he remembered the unspoken rules of urban life in Milwaukee. As a teenager in the 1960s, Adam learned the following:

The south side was a place where Black people could work on that side of town during the day but you best not be there after dark. It was well-known that you best be out of there after dark. I lived in Hillside and you didn't go past Walnut Street, then North Avenue (Adam, Interview, 2015).

Earlier in the chapter, Paulina shared that Latins were welcomed to live next door to the European-Americans. It was implied that Latins were more acceptable than African Americans. Again, it could have been because of religious values, other languages than just English, and it most likely was race. To many in the Polish American community, the African American was unknown.

In both the testimonies of Adam and Paulina, the subtle code words for talking about race along with ethnicity is part of the difference with the Latin community and the African American community. Adam's code words of 'not going to the south side after dark', meant Black people were putting their lives at risk venturing into white neighborhoods where they were not welcome. Adam refers to the strict boundaries and limitations of mobility because of redlining practices. Paulina opined on her interpretations of why Polish people seemed to be more accepting of Latinos because of all the qualities acceptable were attributed to white skinned people. The diminished racialization of Latinos in Milwaukee could have been because of the proximity in living arrangements, the fact that they worshipped together weekly, and their kids went to the same schools. Anne Bonds interprets a normative racial framework develops reaffirming the privileged status of whites (Bonds, 2013). In many ways, the whites on Milwaukee's south side determined that of the minorities in Milwaukee, the lighter- skinned minority were allowed to live next door.

Not only was segregation and discrimination prevalent in housing, but for the Latin community, the proliferation of the discriminatory and racist practices was most evident in the churches and schools of the near south side. This is the beginning of how Latina activists who were active in their faith community, part of a family network, and lived in a confined geographic area, determined they would stand up for their community.

### **Latins and Polish clash in churches and schools**

The 1970s brought about tremendous changes for the Polish American community. First, they learned of Hispanic families' strong affiliation to the Catholic church and their hopes for



hearing religious services in Spanish, their native language. Latinos became active in local churches, asking the secular and religious leadership for permission to celebrate their culture. A culture clash between the Polish American and Latino community became evident in the church. Dalia, a Polish American in her early 20s, recalled:

There was a big fight, the whites who were close minded, Fr. Garrett and another priest who spoke Spanish, they tried to get everybody to work together. They fought. The Latinos had their solid mind and the whites did too, they clashed. We had their festivals and then ours, it took a lot of time and effort for people to come together. No one was being very Christian, so I switched to St. Gabriel's (Dalia, Interview, 2015).

The exchange described by Dalia provides a glimpse of internal conversations with the local church about the intersections of the Polish American and the Hispanic community in nearby churches throughout the south side. While the transition to English masses happened in the Dalia switched to St. Gabriel's because it was still predominantly white congregants in the church and not so much tension with Latinos. For many of the first Polish immigrants, the church was the cornerstone of the neighborhood where members could retain their language, culture and faith. Over time, Polish churches assimilated to the English culture and future generations requested more religious services (mass) in English. It is understandable of the clash of Polish Americans who no longer had a Polish language mass available in the neighborhood and now the newer immigrant group (Hispanics) were demanding Spanish language mass.

During my rookie year as a community organizer with MICA in 1993, I distinctly remember the number of Latinos who spoke about the challenges of being newcomers in predominantly Polish American churches. Latino leaders in several churches from St. Wenceslaus, St. Patrick's, Our Lady of Guadalupe, and St. Gabriel's struggled to become part of Parish Councils (governing body of the local Catholic Church) because Polish American leaders did not want to lose control and accept the new immigrant group. In addition, the Archdiocese of Milwaukee hesitated

in the 1970s with the assignment and placement of Spanish- speaking clergy for the Latino population. By the early 1980s, Catholic parishes had staffed churches with bilingual priests and deacons.

A change over time occurred and today, it is common place to find many of the churches scattered throughout the south side with bilingual priests, but in the late 1960s and early 1970s, this was a struggle. Along with the increased presence of Latinos in churches was the population surge in the classroom in both public and private schools. The issue of school choice within the Latin diaspora was another area that requires further research because I did find a difference between Latina activists, and their schooling related to their parents' income and class. While some Latino families did attend private Catholic schools, many Latino children attended Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

### **Desegregation and Milwaukee public schools**

The influx of African Americans to Milwaukee in the 1960s, followed by Latinos in the 1960s and 1970s heightened the needs of African American and Latino children. The discrimination and racism that existed throughout Milwaukee was evident by the policies at the school and district level. Although thousands of Black students lived in the City of Milwaukee, they were only allowed to attend 'Black schools.' Historian Jack Dougherty (2004) explains how the evolution of civil rights issues in education began with the first Black residents as early as the 1920s. Young Black professionals who became teachers were not afforded the same opportunities as white teachers. Families were not allowed to choose schools outside of their designated zone. Activists in Milwaukee's African American community fought for Black school reform, not only for students but for teachers.

Likewise, Spanish- speaking students had no formal support system in the classroom. None of the teachers spoke Spanish, and they were unfamiliar with the backgrounds of migrant families

who might have worked in rural areas during the summer months. Teachers were unacquainted with communicating with parents who only spoke Spanish. The Milwaukee Public School District had not dealt with these types of issues, even though prior groups had teachers who spoke Polish or German (Gurda, 1999). For Antonia, Raquel, and Tina they shared how each one had common experiences motivating them to collectively on identifying the needs of Latin students and parents. Simultaneously, on the north side, activist and attorney Lloyd Barbee, along with the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), filed a lawsuit to end racial segregation in MPS. Barbee organized the Milwaukee United School Integration Committee (MUSIC), and with parents, students, and community members participated in direct-action organizing campaigns to heighten awareness of quality and equal education for all students. In 1976, federal Judge John Reynolds found the MPS Board guilty of creating and maintaining segregation, and subsequently issued a desegregation order to MPS (March on Milwaukee, n.d.)

Some scholarship has revealed the impact of desegregation efforts in Milwaukee with particular focus on the experience in the African American community (Dougherty, 2004; Fuller, 1985; Jones, 2009). A case study by Dr. Tony Báez examined the desegregation process in MPS expressed concerns that Hispanic students were classified as “non-Black” or “white” and no recognition of a different identifiable ethnic/racial group for student assignment purposes and bilingual teacher placement (1980). The two predominant schools serving Hispanic children were Vieau Elementary School located on 4<sup>th</sup> and National Avenue and South Division High School on 15<sup>th</sup> and Lapham Boulevard. This dissertation provides some narrative about the experiences of Latinos in MPS during their formative years in elementary and high schools, and how they encountered neglect, racism, and discrimination in the classroom and how these experiences motivated them into activism efforts for the Latinx community. The participation and advocacy

work of Latino organizers, parents and students in schools became a focal point, and created divisions between the Polish American and Latino community.

### **The impact of Latina organizing in Milwaukee public schools**

As more migrant families decided to make Milwaukee their home, many families chose public education over private schools. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, MPS did not have bilingual or bicultural staff to meet the needs of the Latino population. Raquel, a recent graduate of MPS with farmworker experience knew the challenges of navigating both worlds of Spanish-speaking homes and English-speaking school environment. Many of the young Latina activists who were interviewed for this research, recalled how Latino children had desk spaces in the coat room. Bilingual children had to translate conversations with non-English speaking children, and these same children served as interpreters for adult conversations between parents and teachers (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

While Latinas and Blacks had their entrée into community organizing through education, the white community found themselves losing prominence and control in the schools. Not only did Latinos have greater physical presence, they organized and demanded that MPS provide bilingual education. The Polish American community was threatened by the actions of Latinos for bilingual education efforts. For one of the participants, Dalia, a Polish American, recollected how the same racist comments she heard from her grandparents continued with some teachers when she had school age children in the late 1970s. The following statement shows how Dalia recalled the disparaging comments about the non-white community:

If you want your kids to have mental issues then keep them on the south side because they will be underdogs. At the other school on the north side, they could learn how to fight, physical harm is better than mental harm and you cannot rise or get out of mental issues. If you get beat up, you can get over it, therefore I put my kids up there on the north side (Dalia, Interview, 2015).

The school teacher's statement reflects her racist attitudes towards Latinos and promoting fear with parents that the new Latino immigrant community would be the dominant majority in the classroom. The teacher insinuates that Latinos were fighting to have rights in the classroom and white children would suffer the consequences. This belief that dominance, or majority, relates to superiority skewed this teacher's beliefs (Solórzano, 2002, 1998). In addition, the teacher perpetuates racist ideology that "the north side" (code for Blacks) is embedded with the notion of negative or violent behavior. The teacher goes on to say that physical harm is better than mental harm, implying wounds would heal, but once you damage emotions and feelings of a child, these actions could be irreversible and more damaging. Dalia observed the Latino movement saw the bickering between both communities, the Latinos/Mexicans wanted a bilingual school and "we [whites] did not. The Latinos would look down their nose at you" (Dalia, Interview, 2015). After my interview with Dalia, I gained a sense that new immigrants should assimilate to ways of American culture, embracing the English language, and not embracing the acculturation of Latinos.

The effects of the integration after the desegregation plan was implemented in Milwaukee, motivated the creation of a City-Wide Bilingual Bicultural Advisory Committee (CWBBAC). Spokespersons for CWBBAC had issues with Latino students and teachers who were counted as "white." The group advocated for a standard that "Latinos need to be defined as an ethnic/racial/minority and an identifiable class forming part of the minority population of the district." Clara E. Rodríguez's scholarship underscores how many Latinos view race from a cultural, national origin, or ethnic background, a combination and skin color (Rodríguez, C. E., 2011). The different opinions about how Latinos fit into the Black-White paradigm of Milwaukee Public School, resulted in no different classification for Latino/a in Milwaukee Public Schools. Not only did Latinos face the lack of representation on the MPS Board, they only had one or two Latino

individuals within the senior administration, no bilingual teachers in the classrooms, and they faced the negative reaction from some in the Polish American community about a possible takeover.

Desegregation impacted the Polish American community on multiple fronts; at all levels from administration, to the classroom, to the playground, everyone had to abide by the new desegregation plan. This dissertation begins to shed some information on the social inequities for Latino children and families, but it also demonstrates how the once predominantly Polish American community felt threatened by Latinos in their neighborhoods, churches, and schools. Simultaneously, Latinos were tired of being treated as outsiders, and organized for their rights and privileges at Vieau Elementary School and South Division High School. As Latinos noticed the neglect in the classrooms at the elementary through high school levels, they began to realize most of their children were not being encouraged nor motivated to pursue higher education; instead they were led to service and hospitality careers. According to Eduardo, a young Chicano in his 20s:

The kids were not stable in the public schools, they were being expelled. They didn't want to go school. Education has been the longest issue in Wisconsin, from that time to the present. The same system we fought from education to taking over the Chancellor office was all education. When we took over the Chancellor's office at UW-Milwaukee in 1970, we saw that a lot of young people who graduated high school had no place to go, they were not being counseled to go into higher education, no motivation for them to go to higher education. It was the system (Eduardo, Interview, 2016).

The educational issues mentioned by Eduardo speaks volumes about Latinos' hopes for their children to have better lives than their own, and to pursue educational opportunities. Eduardo understood the systemic racism existing at the local school level within MPS and other educational institutions. Eduardo knew firsthand from young Latina activists who had attended or organized parents at Vieau Elementary school and South Division H.S of the unequal treatment of Latino children, the lack of information to parents who only spoke Spanish, and a culture of teachers and administrators who felt superior to Latin immigrants or newcomers. The issues of school choice

were greatly influenced by the residence of families. In the late 1960s, the housing options, and availability, on the north and south sides, for minority groups were not promising.

The impact of the Civil Rights movement, along with the increased presence of Latinos and African Americans led to white homeowners leaving the city of Milwaukee in droves. In a recent Latino Milwaukee study by Marc Levine, he shows the “shrinking white non-Hispanic population of the over-65 to the rising under 18 Latin population.” Since 1990, Milwaukee’s white non-Hispanic population has decreased from 70.8 in 1990 to 54.1 in 2013, while conversely the Hispanic percentage has increased from 5.8 in 1990 to 15.4 in 2013 (Levine, 2016, pp. 38-40). The next section shows how the phenomena of ‘white flight’ exacerbated issues of concentrated poverty, high unemployment, and low homeownership.

### **From colliding diasporas to urban decline**

For the Latino and African American community, a sense of empowerment had been established with the passing of the Open Housing legislation in 1968, increased access to higher education institutions, better employment opportunities, and educational reform. On the other hand, the Polish American community experienced a sense of decline, and recognition of a new combined population of African Americans and Latinos in Milwaukee. Each community interacted with each other at different levels; African Americans marched to the south side demanding their rights for Open Housing, while Latinos lived next door to the Polish community. Different alliances were built at times based on activism and fighting for rights of low to working class families, these alliances included Blacks and Latinos. Other alliances were quietly being built with Latinos and white European American community to differentiate themselves from activists, these individuals were aspiring to become more of the emerging middle-class. Ideologies about racialization and geography were at the forefront when answering one of my research questions: How was Latin ethnic consciousness constructed within the migration to Milwaukee’s Polish

American community? Two answers arose to this question: (1) Latin identity was constructed in relation to Polish Latino and Black-white conflicts and (2) in respect to poor housing and educational conditions which motivated Latina activism.

### **The rise of Latina activism in Milwaukee**

As the Latin and African American communities became astute about systemic and institutional racism in the school system, lending practices of financial institutions, unequal access to employment opportunities, and lack of landlord accountability, activists began to analyze how local elected officials played a role in perpetuating unequal access to federal programs via decisions at City Hall. During the late 1960s, and early 1970s, inner-city communities were reeling from urban renewal plans promoted by President Eisenhower's administration regarding the Highway system. In Milwaukee, the planned interstate system crisscrossed across vibrant neighborhoods in the central city. The neighborhoods experienced the loss of thousands of homes, displaced businesses, and insufficient support services for displaced renters and homeowners.

Shortly thereafter, President Lyndon B. Johnson created the Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act of 1966 to combat poverty in major urban areas throughout the United States. The goals of the Model Cities<sup>11</sup> project was to allow American cities to submit proposals and compete for federal funding by creating programs to curtail urban violence, create jobs, improve the physical infrastructure, and rebuild neighborhoods and cities. Providing federal funding to cities with extreme signs of poverty and disinvestment, was an idealistic goal. The problem in Milwaukee was that locally elected alderpersons on Milwaukee's Common Council

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<sup>11</sup> The Model Cities project ran from 1969 to 1974, an element under President Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society and War on Poverty. The results were mixed in Milwaukee, over 400 housing units were built, 900 rehabbed homes, but unemployment rose from 6.3% in 1970 to 13.5% in 1975 (From the civil rights trenches to City Hall, 2007).



exacerbated the problem by not competing for the funds, and eventually not accepting some of the funds in specific areas of the city.

The denial of federal resources for the poor people of the south side reinforced Latinas' understanding of the systemic levels of discrimination and racism by their local elected official, namely Alderman Robert Sulkowski. The relationship between the federal government and local municipalities led to contentious situations for Sulkowski. Alderman Sulkowski believed that inferiority and poverty were tied to both African American residents of the north side and Latinos on the south side. The prominence of Alderman Sulkowski and his racist remarks were evident when he gave his opinion about the new Latin south siders when he commented to a journalist:

If Mexicans who don't like my decisions, they should go back to Texas (McNulty Represents Change, 1972).

The linked racialization of Blacks to diminished quality of life on the south side was a belief strongly held by Alderman Sulkowski. For the Latin community, the failure to secure the Model Cities project was most pronounced on Milwaukee's south side community because the local elected official did not want to secure the funding for his area. The next chapter will provide greater detail about SWEAT Associates and the lack of the Model Cities program in Milwaukee's south side in the late 1960s.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter showed how white Polish descendants and Latins of a variety of skin tones lived in a relatively small defined geographic area of Milwaukee's south side from 1<sup>st</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> and Pierce to Mitchell Streets, and how each group created ethnic enclaves. As each ethnic or racial group increases in population, the other groups might feel threatened; sometimes they are forced out or they voluntarily leave. The issues of newcomers frequently reoccur with each new group; they want to have a community where their culture, language, and identity are preserved and

protected. Ironically, the majority in a neighborhood feels threatened especially if they had a past of being a minority or less dominant group.

Some in the Polish community used their white superiority and dominance against Latinos and Blacks. The interethnic and interracial divide that occurred was because the non-white community were standing up for their rights. Instead of changing policies in a collaborative manner, change only happened in an adversarial manner which fractured the entire community, creating separate and segregated communities of whites and non-whites.

A key finding is that conflict might lessen if individuals take the time to learn about other communities, not always advancing their own agenda with their specific ethnic group. Latinas were speaking out and organizing campaigns on several different issues, asking, or in some cases demanding, to be seated at the table. Inviting newcomers to be present on new initiatives, strategic planning, or sharing findings is still an ongoing challenge that policy makers, educators, and business owners must continuously strive to improve.

The conflicts that arose between the Polish and Latin community began when Latin newcomers expected to have the same rights and privileges in their neighborhoods, especially in the church. Latins wanted to celebrate a religious service with their own customs and traditions but they encountered resistance from the Polish community. Multiple communities clashed over housing, the Polish Latino and the white-Black communities. The communities of color joined together to resist the practices of white landlords. This coalition of Black and Brown people threatened the white Polish community and led to white flight. This action created an opportunity for Latins but also created disinvestment because many of the business owners left the area and home ownership decreased.

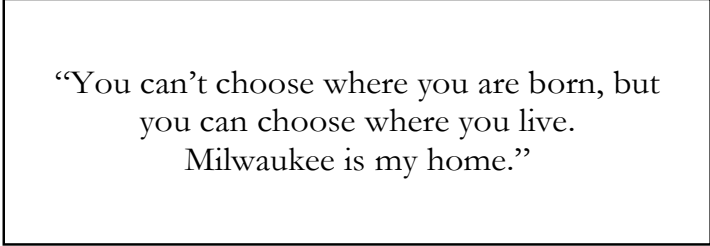
The rise of Latina activism began because of substandard police relations with the Latin community. There was a lack of accountability with Police Chief Breier and there was an

understanding of how the “men’s club” including some priests, the Police Chief and the Mayor who provided a skewed leadership style that catered to the Polish community.

## Chapter 5

### An Outsider Organizes the South Side:

#### Mary Anne McNulty's Activism and Impacts



“You can’t choose where you are born, but  
you can choose where you live.  
Milwaukee is my home.”

Figure 5.1 Mary Anne’ quoted response to political barbs in the 1972 election as published in *The Milwaukee Journal* (“Homework stressed by McNulty,” 1973).

After three years of living in Milwaukee, Mary Anne McNulty decided to run for a public office in Milwaukee’s south side district. In Figure 5.1, Mary Anne responded to insults from her political opponent about being an ‘outsider’ and she responded that she chose to be a resident of Milwaukee, no one had forced her to move to Milwaukee. This was her first attempt for public office followed by two other bids in 1973 and 1983. Although Mary did not win in the 1972 and 1973 elections, she continued her activism efforts in the 12<sup>th</sup> district (south side).

In the late 1960s and 1970s Milwaukee saw an upsurge in urban activism. The Open Housing Marches in Milwaukee are a well-known and often- studied example (Jones, 2009; Dougherty, 2004; Greenan, 2006; Gieb, 1998; Trotter, 1985). Less well known, though, are the efforts of community coalitions and their organizers that followed in the wake of the civil rights movement in many cities across the country. In particular, the work of women activists during this era is neglected. In Milwaukee, Mary Anne McNulty was a key organizer with SWEAT Associates<sup>12</sup>, a grassroots organization helping Milwaukee’s south side underemployed and unemployed find work

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<sup>12</sup> SWEAT is not an acronym rather the word is used as a metaphor of group of individuals working diligently with perspiration. SWEAT Associates is the name of a grassroots coalition of residents in Milwaukee’s south side community working for the rights of underemployed and unemployed individuals.

in the summer of 1971. In this chapter I explore how Mary Anne, a newcomer and outsider to Milwaukee, redefined who she was, and set out on a course to define and determine her ideals.

While she engaged in various campaigns ranging from housing, to education, to recycling programs, and to senior city activities, according to my interview participants, Mary Anne also embodied traditionally feminine qualities of helping, listening, and nurturing other women and children in the process. Through emotional bonds, Mary Anne forged alliances utilizing a gendered approach that differed from other existing interracial coalitions. Other coalitions of the time, whether it was the Open Housing marches, or advocating for Migrant Farm Worker rights, were male-led campaigns focused on building power. Although initially a stranger to Milwaukee, Mary Anne shaped community organizing in Milwaukee in three significant ways: Through the themes of self-empowerment, through her gendered community-organizing approaches, and through her influence on the future actions of Latina activists in Milwaukee's Latin community.

First, Mary Anne McNulty had a 'can do' attitude. In the summer of 1971, Mary Anne along with fellow organizers formed SWEAT Associates to address the inequities in the Polish and Latin communities, an area depleted of financial resources from the skewed practices of the local politician-Alderman Sulkowski. Mary Anne learned about self-empowerment from her parents, friends, and social justice activities in the church. Her self-empowerment sprang from her knowledge that her actions could make a difference. Mary Anne learned at an early age about "self-love, self-valuation and self-respect" (Collins, 2000). Patricia Hill Collins explains how increased knowledge of one's self, constant reflection, increases a consciousness of listening to one's thoughts and knowing what is best. It's important to differentiate between self-empowerment, which is defined here, and "empowerment"—a developmental process that includes building skills through repetitive cycles of action and reflection that evoke new skills and understandings" (Stall & Stoecker, 1998, p. 741).

In contrast, Saul Alinsky (2010) operated from a framework that there are only winners and losers, respecting competition, not focused on maintain relationships. Stall and Stoecker disagree with the Alinsky model of linking community organizing ability with one's biological sex, but instead find "women-centered organizing," as an inclusive method of building relationships and resources, diversifying leadership, and more communal participation (Stall & Stoecker, 1998). Third, this feminist approach influenced some Latinas to believe they could make a difference, even if they were the primary caregiver for their parents or their children. A number of feminist scholars share new perspectives about community activism and feminist politic. They write about diverse women whose stories are, not part of historical records; from the inclusion of lesbian activists, to African American mothers advocating for their children in schools, to building a neighborhood coalition to combat the sporting industrial complex (Gluck, Blackwell, Cotrell, & Harper, 1998; Taylor & Rupp, 1998; Feldman et. al., 1998). Latina activists found ways to negotiate and balance their community organizing lives with their family commitments. I will build on this scholarship that analyzes how gender informs community activism, focusing on how gender, race, class, and ethnicity shaped Latina activism in Milwaukee (Stall & Stoecker, 2005; Naples, 2012; Martin, 2002; Taylor, 1999).

This chapter explores how Mary Anne McNulty went from being an outsider in her white neighborhood in Chicago and in the Latin community of Milwaukee being known as "*la guera*,"<sup>13</sup> to being a fully accepted member of the community by working as a leader, mentor, and influential activist. Additionally, this chapter explores how even though she begins an outsider, her work had great influence on the south side of Milwaukee. Days after her death on November 6, 2009, a celebration of Mary Anne McNulty's life and legacy took place at both St. Hyacinth's Catholic

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<sup>13</sup> Spanish slang term meaning light skinned.

Church in Milwaukee (Umhoefer, 2009) and Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Chicago (Death Notice, 2009), so great was her impact on both these communities.

### **Always the Outsider**

Mary Anne McNulty grew up in a working to middle class, Irish Catholic, all-white, suburb on the south side of Chicago. Her faith was nurtured at St. Justin's Catholic Church where she participated in youth-led discussion groups that often focused on social justice issues. The product of a close-knit Irish Catholic family within a tight community, she attended a private Catholic high school for girls, Mercy High School, graduating in 1966 (McNulty P., 2009). As a teenager during her involvement in the Chicago Freedom Movement, a campaign supporting civil rights from southern cities to northern cities, Mary Anne experienced being the 'outsider' within her own all-white neighborhood. In August 1966, shortly after Mary Anne's high school graduation, Martin Luther King Jr. peacefully marched in Chicago for Open Housing but was met by a violent crowd throwing bricks and bottles. Mary Anne's neighborhood on the west side of Chicago, near the West Lawn and Marquette Park neighborhoods was one of those targeted by the African American community to address racism and discrimination housing practices. Mary Anne, with two close friends, Thomas<sup>14</sup> and Megan, went to a pre-march rally on 43<sup>rd</sup> Street in the Bronzeville neighborhood on the evening of August 4, 1966 to support Dr. King's efforts. According to Thomas:

We went to Bronzeville with Dr. King, it was a wonderful night, singing freedom songs and jumping around. It was fun, clapping and getting ready for the march the next day. The next day, on August 5, 1966, I marched. Mary Anne never marched with us, she was always on the outskirts trying to make peace, handing out flyers to encourage the neighbors not to get revved up. Mary Anne was trying to cool off the people who were throwing rocks and bricks at us. There was a lot of venom, a lot of

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas was a very close friend of Mary Anne's; they attended the same church youth group in Chicago, bonding over social justice issues. He was a student at Marquette who was a conscientious objector against the war in Vietnam.

fear of people in our neighborhood and her neighborhood because the Blacks were coming (interview, May 9, 2016).

According to Cohen and Taylor, the Chicago Freedom Movement intensified after Martin Luther King Jr. had lived in Chicago for seven months. Civil rights marches became a regular occurrence, and white counterdemonstrators called out, “Two, four, six, eight, we don’t want to integrate” (Cohen & Taylor, 2000). Thomas’s descriptions of Mary Anne’s early activism contextualizes her understanding of racial tensions between Black and white communities. Thomas says of Mary Anne at the march: “She did not march with us, nor did she align with the white people yelling and screaming hate speech.” Mary Anne was an outsider to both distinct crowds at the same event. In this moment, Mary Anne was an outsider to the African American community because she was a white resident of the neighborhood where they protested, and an outsider within her own community because she did not share the racist attitudes of her neighbors. Mary Anne’s ethnicity, gender, class and race all intersected as she attempted to restore peace in a highly charged environment. Thomas concluded this story by saying this was an important time in their lives, advocating and supporting open housing legislation efforts.

Adding to the intensity of the marches was a complicating factor: Mary Anne’s father was a precinct captain with the Chicago Police department, part of the “Richard M. Daley machine.” The Daley machine refers to the longest- serving members of the city of Chicago run by the Richard J. Daley, and by his son, Richard M. Daley both serving as Mayor of Chicago for over 20 years. Mayor Richard J. Daley saw “the great liberal crusades of the 1950s and 1960s – civil rights, the War on Poverty, the anti-war movement – as a threat to his power, and he battled against all of them” (Cohen & Taylor, 2000, p. 8). In the *American Pharaoh: Mayor Richard J. Daley - His Battle for Chicago and the Nation.*, Cohen and Taylor describe the Daley machine’s use of close relationships between their precinct captain to the voters within their domain, rather than political strength to win



elections and “the machine’s leadership was made up of Daley’s fellow Irish Catholics” (Cohen & Taylor, 2000, p. 7). Mary Anne tackled many challenges, including facing her father’s colleagues at the protest, and her angry white neighbors protesting integration, but none of it stopped her from living her ideals. Mary Anne McNulty was white; she lived in a white neighborhood, and although she did not espouse the same ideals as her white neighbors, her whiteness allowed her to know how some racist white people act and react to people of color. As Patricia Hill Collins points out, being part of this racial class, Mary Ann knew firsthand the privileges of white power in the neighborhood, church, schools, or businesses. We do not know for certain what she was feeling or thinking at this time, but do we know she acted on her principles, her values of fairness, and equality, regardless of race. Collins (2000) discusses how the “process Black women journey toward and understanding of how our personal lives have been fundamentally shaped by intersecting oppressions of race, gender, sexuality, and class” (p. 114). This same type of ‘self-definition and self-valuation’ is a common theme with some Black feminists (Collins, 1986, pp. 14-16). As expressed by Mary Anne in her journal or “My Log, (n.d.):”

By osmosis I learned the functioning and nature of [the Daley Machine] political organization; good service to the constituents, information regarding candidates, policies and procedures, and an involvement of grassroots people in the political process were key to its structure (McNulty M. A., Miscellaneous papers).

Mary Anne’s description here, of learning the importance of relationship building, shows how it was informed by her father’s work in the police department and the community. In many ways, this nourishment of understanding communities or building community was done by building relationships with people in the community. These strong relationships could build a grassroots coalition, essential to building or creating power in a political process. The political organization that Mary Anne speaks of could be any organization: The school, the church, the neighborhood, the

park, Milwaukee County Transportation Commission, employers, or City of Milwaukee Housing Authority.

### Feeling lost

In Mary Anne's log, she writes about the lack of direction in her life after high school. Although, Mary Anne participated in social justice campaigns, she wrote in her log about "the wonder years, my Chicago experience and a sense of being lost" Peg, Mary Anne's, sister substantiated these sentiments in her eulogy, stating: "Mary Anne was trying to find her niche. She wanted to be involved in some social cause" (McNulty M. A., McNulty Family Letters, n.d.). Soon after graduating from Mercy High School in Chicago, Mary Anne worked as a clerk for the United States Department of Justice, Federal Bureau of Investigation in Chicago.

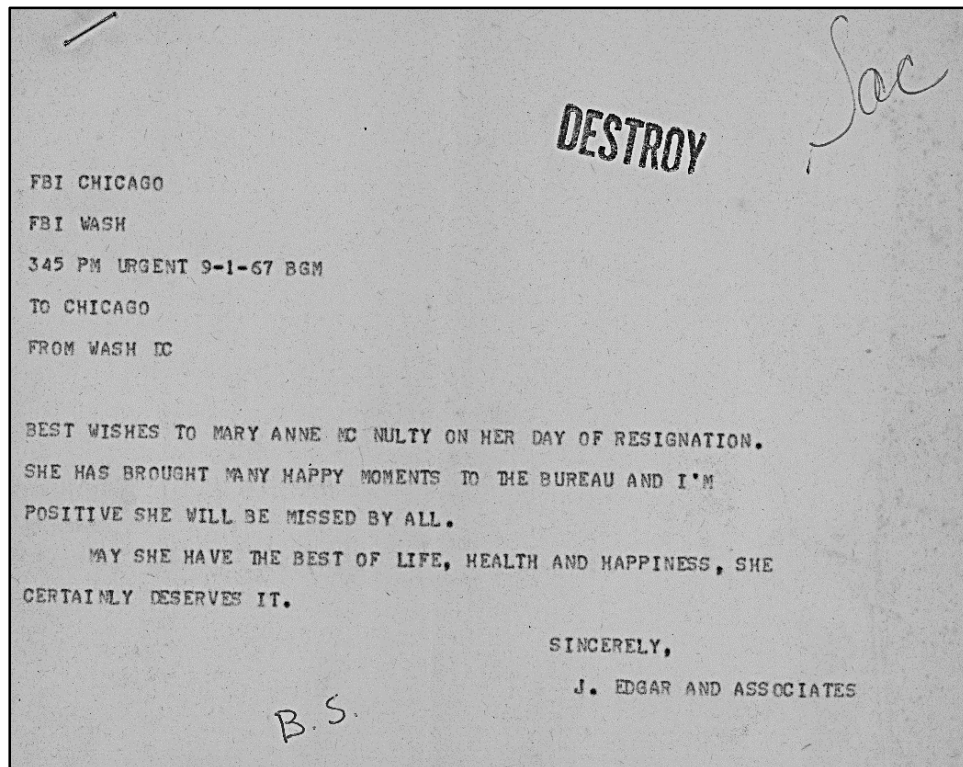


Figure 5.2 Resignation memo to Mary Anne McNulty (McNulty M. A., Federal Bureau of Investigation - Office Clerk, n.d).

The congratulatory telegram (see Figure 5.2) from J. Edgar Hoover and Associates, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation refers to Mary Anne in the third person. The handwriting is from Mary Anne. Not much is known about her time at the FBI, but it is interesting to note her handwritten notes of “SAC” and “B.S.” on the telegram. Knowing Mary Anne’s personality, I interpret her note of “B.S” to mean bullshit, and this personal note from the most powerful male figure in the U.S. Department of Justice was nonsense. Her cynicism shines through when she questions the sincerity of an FBI cabinet member of President Lyndon B. Johnson wishing her the best in her retirement. Another point to note is her disregard of the order to “DESTROY” the telegram as stamped on it (see Figure 5.1. (McNulty M. A., Federal Bureau of Investigation - Office Clerk, n.d).

A picture of her behind the desk at the FBI office (see Figure 5.3) and an official telegram from Washington, D.C. are the only existing documents related to her life after high school. It is interesting to note that – compared with these few documents on her job with the FBI - Mary Anne’s personal collection contains far more primary and secondary documents about her political involvement in actions opposing the policies of the federal government; whether it was objecting to the Vietnam War, advocating for federal resources from the Model Cities project, or protesting the U.S. involvement with El Salvador’s civil war (McNulty M. A., Federal Bureau of Investigation - Office Clerk, n.d).



Figure 5.3 Mary Anne, circa 1967. Unknown reason for the photo (McNulty M. A., Federal Bureau of Investigation - Office Clerk, n.d).

Following her one-year appointment at the FBI office, Mary Anne enrolled at Loyola University for eighteen months. By late winter 1968, Mary Anne considered joining Vista Volunteers, until her friend Thomas, invited her to move to Milwaukee to join the Inner- City Development Project (ICDP), one of the seven Community Action Programs (CAP) administered by the Social Development Commission (Braun, 2001). Mary Ann's work at ICDP was just the beginning of her career in Milwaukee.

From 1964 to 1972, Milwaukee County created seven Community Action Programs (CAP) throughout the central city to create change and empower the poor. These seven CAP agencies were created for residents who typically had no power on policy but could receive training to become a voice in one of these agencies. According to Mark E. Braun, "Evidence shows that as the poor obtained decision-making authority, they gained clout, access to financial resources, and entrée to public officials" (Braun, 2001, p. 10). Braun provides scholarship about antipoverty agencies, the

effect of participatory democratic decision making, and the overall impact of these agencies in the neighborhoods scattered throughout Milwaukee.

### **Federal policy**

President Lyndon B. Johnson created the *Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Act of 1966* to combat poverty in urban areas throughout the United States. At the time, Alderman Robert Sulkowski represented the predominantly Polish American and increasing Latin community. Although Sulkowski's district was changing, most of his constituents were Polish individuals with a strong voting record. He did not want to receive federal dollars from the Model Cities Program because he feared this program would attract low-income housing, and then more Blacks and Latinos would move into the south side community decreasing the quality of life (Rodriguez & Shelly, 2009). While many Hispanic constituents in Alderman Sulkowski's district wanted a fair share of the money, they did not have their representative's support, and once the money was allocated in the Common Council, a minimal amount of money was allocated to the south side district. The action at this legislative body positioned the African American community with an advantage over the Latin community, thus beginning decades of competition between the two newest and largest minority groups in Milwaukee.

According to *The Milwaukee Sentinel* article titled, "Model Cities Program is Mayor's Monument" (March 31, 1972), highlighted an "a major controversy developed over how the residents of the area were to be represented in the Model Cities structure." This upset advocacy groups and low-income residents on the near south side who developed local organizing campaigns criticizing the implementation of the Model Cities Project. Figure 5.4 is a map detailing the majority of resources to the Milwaukee north and west side communities.



Figure 5.4 Map of Milwaukee Model City Program  
(Model Cities Program is Mayor's Monument," 1972)

The lack of attention to Milwaukee's south side motivated the formation of a pan-Latino coalition titled, "*La Coalición Latina*" composed of the *La Organización Puertorriqueña*, *Panorama Hispana*, and UWM's Institute for Spanish Speaking. Jose Quiñones, stated, "there are approximately 13,000 Latins living in the target area that haven't received any benefits from Model Cities, the program has refused to fund any proposal submitted by any Latin organization" (Latinos Encontra de Model Cities, 1972). This pan-Latino coalition met Mayor Maier and the Common Council with a series of demands including: 1) The immediate consideration of proposals submitted by Latino organizations 2) An affirmative staff hiring program 3) Latin membership in Model Cities boards and committees. Some of the proposals submitted included: Increased funding for recreational programming, social services, transportation services for families to visit loved ones in jails and educational programming. According to Dr. Fernandez, the spokesperson for the group,

“Latinos represent 1/9<sup>th</sup> of the city population yet are ignored and discriminated against in the Model Cities process (1972). The Latin community was outraged that the federal government appropriated \$8.2 million to Milwaukee, yet the Latin-American community received nothing. The lack of inclusion of Milwaukee’s south side with the Model Cities Project was discrimination, and an affront to the newcomers of Milwaukee.

*La Coalición Latina* had the best intentions for the community by forming a pan-Latino coalition, sending out a press release, and making demands to city officials but did not have as great an impact as the media attention garnered by SWEAT Associates, a grassroots organization formed by leaders at ICDP. The next section describes the impact of federal policy in Milwaukee.

### **Arrival in Milwaukee**

During Mary Anne’s first year in Milwaukee, she worked as a community organizer, establishing relationships in the 12<sup>th</sup> district. It was through these relationships she learned about the untenable situations for families and children, sparking her collective work with others who wanted to improve the quality of life for the community. Mary Anne’s résumé is straightforward, almost clinical-like of visiting homes and handing out information about educational programs, activities for children, and employment information. In fact, the relationships Mary Anne built in the neighborhood allowed her to mobilize and organize residents for community organizing activities. Mary Anne and other colleagues decided a grassroots organization was required. Thus, SWEAT Associates was born (McNulty M. A., "My Log", n.d.). Jack Gleason recalled the early years of SWEAT Associates when Mary Anne McNulty asked:

What if we just organized people to just work on something that needed doing and sent a bill to whoever could have/should have been getting the work done? In our neighborhood, there’s plenty of work that needs to be done’ (Interview, 2017).

Mary Anne’s statement above about sending a bill to the people in power, shows how Mary Anne wanted to hold those in authority accountable for their lack of actions, and emphasizing,

‘there’s plenty of work that needs to be done.’ Mary Anne’s strategies exemplify a feminist approach, which acknowledges that often women desire to improve the well-being and public safety of community members, working on a small scale, through an informal process to engage other women, the elderly, and young people. Some traditional male organizers would argue this labor-intensive approach does not have the tenets of building a large organization with broad membership, one connected to a national organization with multi-level leadership and clearly defined roles for men and women (Eduardo, Interview, 2016). Martin argues that women tend to focus on issues related to families and children, whereas men focus on local, state, and national resources (Martin, 2002; Naples, 1998). Martin’s work aligns with other research that shows women engage in ‘women-centered’ work, building networks and empowering residents to think of solutions to problems (Stall & Stoecker, 1998; Gittell, Ortega-Bustamente, & Steffy, 2000).

This perspective, organizing individuals in the neighborhood and doing the work that “needs to be done,” is a political discourse framework that is clearly feminist. Nancy A. Naples (1998) chronicles the different feminist discourses in community activism, and how women fight to overcome oppression and change structural levels. Latinas had to develop strategies and plans to address domination and inequality by other groups. One way of doing this was mobilizing many women, “nurturing the leadership skills” and working with other women who mentored them (Naples, 1998, p. 132).

### **Formation of SWEAT Associates**

According to Mary Anne’s friend, Thomas, “We conceived this idea [of SWEAT Associates] because of the frustration in the community, we went out and organized all the people to participate” (Interview, 2016). Mary Anne and other neighborhood workers went to all the people who were unemployed and he recalled, Mary Anne saying, ‘let’s do it’ (Thomas, Interview, 2016). Mary Anne worked in a low-income neighborhood but coming from a middle-class upbringing she



knew what services, should have been available to people regardless of their race, gender, or class. Mary Anne's spoke out for the people in the community and against the oppressive systemic policies in local government. In many ways, despite Mary Anne's educational background, and her strong understanding of the political system, she realized that the established political practices in the neighborhood were entrenched in traditional patriarchal ways, and women were not readily a part of those conversations.

Mary Anne recruited potential members by canvassing the neighborhood. All newly recruited SWEAT Associates were expected to get involved in a project. These projects included cleaning up trash, planting fruits and vegetables, boarding up and painting houses, providing daycare, or playing games with seniors. Many of these projects were gendered because they were hands-on projects that women were traditionally assigned, but Mary Anne wanted help from everyone—male or female. The invoices went out to the State of Wisconsin Department of Health and Human Services, and City of Milwaukee agencies including Department of City Development, Department of Public Works, Housing Authority, Redevelopment Authority, and Recreational Department, as well as to Milwaukee County.

Using street theater tactics, SWEAT Associates built a grassroots organization designed to bring attention to the discrimination against and invisibility of Milwaukee's south side. The street theater tactics was a method for allies to join forces, creating a mini-play to address social inequities which can be seen in Figure 5.4, 5.5, 5.6, 5.14, and 5.17. The pictures in SWEAT Associates was formed to change the status quo. Changing municipal policies required residential recruitment. Sharing information with the residents and inviting them to participate in planning meetings was a central tenet of empowerment and community engagement. Once seen as outsiders in their neighborhood, residents learned a new type of community education model where they could assist in community organizing campaigns, eventually influencing and motivating other people to act. The

residents learned a different, new and gendered style of organizing, one that engaged everyone in the community, where everyone—men, women, elderly, and children—could participate.

### **Gendered tactics and strategies**

In her log, Mary Anne describes her daily routine of going door-to-door, not knowing who might answer the door, and asking people about what community issues they were facing (McNulty M. A., "My Log", n.d.). The importance of meeting people in their homes, where they have a sense of comfort and security, empowers them to talk about problems faced by poor residents. Susan Stall and Randy Stoecker affirm that smaller groups build trust and solidarity in the community (Stall & Stoecker, 1998, p. 746). The 'women-centered' model is one built on establishing relationships, connecting with others in a space or on an issue, nurturing one another, and building trust (Stall & Stoecker, 2005, 1998). Martin (2002) argues that gendered discourse materializes in community organizing. Mary Anne listened to the residents and heard how they received minimal support from local government, the schools, or employers. Many of the residents shared their sense of being outside the system receiving benefits, support, or access by institutions in the neighborhood. Further, being an outsider herself, Mary Anne was likely able to connect with the residents' feelings of frustration as external to the system.

### **The Model Alley program in Milwaukee—spoofing the model cities project**

In 1966, Mayor Henry Maier expressed interest in the Model Cities Project, but his colleagues on the Common Council did not share the same enthusiasm and voted down the Model Cities application (A Close Look at Model Cities, 1972). The implications tied to receiving federal dollars caused the Common Council to reject the Model Cities program. Their inattention to the near south side inspired residents and organizers of SWEAT Associates to mock the Model Cities program. SWEAT Associates created the Model Alley Program, where people could come to the south side of Milwaukee and meet with career counselors roaming around in a red wagon, paint

fences, repair railings and stairs, pull weeds, or remove graffiti, but then would stop working two-thirds down the alley until the city paid for their services.

In the DAWN newsletter – A Model Alley newspaper –announced SWEAT Associates would begin their first day of work with the Model Alley Program, “where men and women who were eager to work but because of the high rates of unemployment were jobless.” The newsletter emphasized that \$8 million a year in federal funds was available for the Model Cities program yet the Model Alley program on Milwaukee’s south side received zero funds – so SWEAT planned to bill the city, state or federal government for their hours worked (McNulty M. A., SWEAT Invoices, n.d.). The newsletter announced a number of community projects including Creation of Model Alley Program, Career Counseling, and Accounts Payable Departments, The Construction of SWEAT Park, SWEAT Housing Squad, SWEAT Senior Citizens Enrichment, SWEAT Unemployment Ball, SWEAT State University, and SWEAT Recycling and Rescue Squad. All the volunteer hours were recorded, and SWEAT Associates expected to get the dollars needed to continue work and improve the neighborhood. An overview of all the projects is depicted in a copy of the “OUTSTANDING BILLS OWED” in Figure 5.6.

### **Creation of Model Alley program**

The Model Alley program parodied the Model Cities program to ridicule the federal government and local public officials by demonstrating that south side residents might attempt to solve issues of unemployment and career counseling in alleys versus the city. The Model Alley program also highlighted the disparity in the allocation of resources from the north and south sides of Milwaukee. In Figure 5.4, organizer Mary Anne McNulty is standing at the rear of the pickup truck talking with other volunteers to work on the Model Alley program.



Figure 5.5 Model Alley Program Banner (Miller, C., Circa 1970s).

### **Unconventional yet serious minded career counselors**

The actions of SWEAT Associates appeared in the *New York Times* with the headlines, “Milwaukee Group Spoofs Job Plans: But Sweat Associates Are Serious About Working” (1971). In Figure 5.5, two women supporters of SWEAT Park roam the alley, hoping to find people interested in learning about career opportunities.

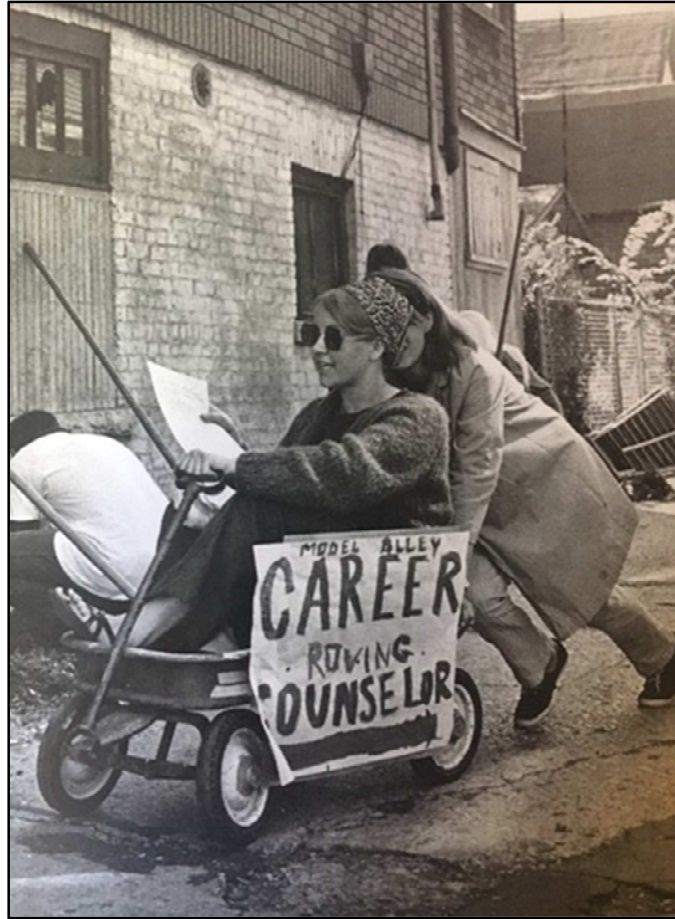


Figure 5.6 Model Alley Career Counselors (Courtesy of Jack Gleason, circa 1970s.)

### **Activist's accountable billing department**

Figure 5.6, shows SWEAT Associates' strategy for identifying which branches of government were liable for specific projects in the neighborhood. This simple chart names the leadership in each institution and provides a range of projects from daycare, to housing inspections, to recycling programs, to boarding up vacant houses, to providing programs for seniors or transportation. It's worth noting that all of the people listed in leadership positions had traditional male names and no women were listed in leadership positions. A log of unpaid invoices identified individuals in leadership positions at the City of Milwaukee, County of Milwaukee, and State of Wisconsin for work completed on daycare, park, agriculture, recycling, home repair, public safety, housing, public relations, and recreational activities.

OUTSTANDING BILLS OWED SWEAT ASSOCIATES			
Customer Name	Project	Bill	Paid
State Division of Health and Soc. Ser.	Day Care	\$245.25	Overdue
Herbert Goetsch Com. of Publ. Wks.	SWEAT PARK	670.50	Overdue
U.S. Dept. of Agriculture	Wheat non plant	294.00	Overdue
Emergency Emp Act Fund	Slum Housing Inspection	142.48	Overdue
Emergency Emp. Act Fund	SWEAT Rescue Squad (recycling)	54.46	Overdue
Model City Program	Model Alley Prog.	144.00	Overdue
Leonard Mendelblatt	Home repair under SWEAT Redevelopment Authority	59.32	Paid in Full
Ted E. Wedemeyer	SWEAT Safety Patrol Boarding up vacant dangerous house	31.90	Overdue
Milwaukee Dept of City Development	SWEAT Redevelopment Authority	435.00	Overdue
County Executive John Doyle	IMAGE Builders (Civic Center West)	49.50	Overdue
Milw. County Sheriff	Moving evicted family into vacant Federal House	49.50	not paid
City Recreation Dept.	SWEAT LEISURE Corps S W E A T Game	105.00 126.00	not paid

Figure 5.7 Outstanding Bills Owed to SWEAT Associates (McNulty M. A., SWEAT Invoices, n.d.).

Recording the hours worked for each project was meticulous; calculations were done to dollars and cents. The SWEAT organizers created a non-aggressive yet confrontational document, the “Outstanding Bills” invoice to elicit a reaction from government officials. SWEAT organizers used a witty manner of changing the balance of power on paper hoping to get a reaction in their actions (Alinsky, 2010). In contrast, David A. Hansher, an assistant city attorney, told SWEAT representatives in a confrontational manner, “If you take over any other public lands, you will be charged” (City threatens to charge 'Sweat', 1971). Finding jobs in the City of Milwaukee was a serious situation for many residents of Milwaukee’s south side. SWEAT Associates was not

deterred by the power of Mayor Maier or the Common Council and created programs to address the pressing issues of the times.



Figure 5.8 Cartoon of SWEAT Associates volunteer and Mayor Henry Maier (publication unknown).

The image above (Figure 5.7) shows a cartoon of a volunteer from SWEAT Associates handing an invoice to Mayor Henry Maier for work done by unemployed workers who needed to be reimbursed by the City of Milwaukee. This was an innovative tactic for raising awareness of the need for jobs, but more importantly, that the City of Milwaukee was late in payment. The tactics and strategies utilized by SWEAT Associates garnered local and national attention. Not only was the story in newsprint, and on television, but Latinas were listening and paying attention.

An article in the *New York Times* stated that the pay for workers involved in any of the projects was figured at a rate of \$3.00/hour. The “Outstanding Bills” in Figure 5.6 represents nearly 800 hours worked by men and women in community improvement projects with the hopes being

paid for their work (Milwaukee Group Spoofs Job Plans: But Sweat Associates Are Serious About Working, 1971). For example, one of the first projects that created momentum for SWEAT Associates was the construction of recreational space for the children of the neighborhood.

Another national magazine wrote about SWEAT Associates' accomplishments of with an article titled, "Work, not Welfare" (1971). The unknown author refers to the ingenious efforts of clearing up a vacant lot, planting a garden, or inspecting slum housing, and then billing the appropriate departments at the City of Milwaukee, or State of Wisconsin. An article in the *Reader's Digest*, stated:

Despite the quixotic methods of SWEAT, there is something quite revelatory about this WPA in reverse. It is one small demonstration that there are plenty of unemployed who do indeed want to work—especially on direct, sensible projects that would benefit communities neglected by uncaring bureaucracies (Work, not welfare, 1971).

The stories of SWEAT Park and other SWEAT campaigns show the kinds of community organizing strategies that Mary Anne used. Many Alinsky- style, male organizers, would not then have used these tactics.

### **Construction of SWEAT Park**

Mary Ann and her colleagues, Renee and Kristelle, went door to door in the community, learning from parents that their children had no safe spaces to play outside within walking distances of their homes. The children were relegated to play in the alleys or streets, but instead played in a vacant neighborhood lot littered with trash. Mary Ann and SWEAT colleagues devised the idea to turn a vacant lot into a playground, a place that would welcome children and families from the neighborhood, eliminating a public nuisance and threat to the neighborhood. These outreach efforts illustrated to the residents that the efforts of SWEAT Associates were inclusive and engaging. Mary Anne McNulty explained:



We scouted the neighborhood for a vacant lot, found it covered with dog shit; we recruited volunteers, we built a park for the kids and sent a bill to Herbert Goetsch, Commissioner of Public Works-City of Milwaukee” (McNulty M. A., SWEAT - Housing, n.d.)

Community residents were excited to be part of an innovative project and understood that the park would create a space for their children and families. Once the SWEAT Park idea was created, Mary Anne organized all aspects of the creation of SWEAT park. According to Raquel, Mary Anne was a central figure in creating the park. The construction of the park took three days; the tot lot was created with old tires, railroad ties, and sewer pipes. Mary Anne organized volunteers to help remove debris and clear the land for the park. The children learned community organizing projects by watching as the adults worked with picks and shovels (see Figure 5.8). As the residents of the neighborhoods included families, men, women, and children. It is difficult to delineate the number of people and the genders who built the part, but the limited photographs show both, men and women represented.



Figure 5.9 Future site of SWEAT park (Rosenberg, N. D., 1971).

Obviously, the children were too young to work; they could not be left at home alone, so they watched from the sidelines. This is a common theme when women organized community improvement projects: Not only did they organize the event, but also, they had to take care of their children. Most women, whether they had children or not, talked about the obvious gender disparity as of children accompanying women in their work; the male organizers rarely had to figure out what to do with their children because their partners or wives were responsible at home with the children. Having female organizers and volunteers meant that the children were always welcomed and present. SWEAT Park created so much excitement in the community that children were eager to run through the tape. One can only imagine that the children felt that SWEAT Park was their park, as it was built by their friends and parents, and so close to their homes.

SWEAT Park's opening provided great media coverage of a wonderful story of community efficacy on Milwaukee's south neighborhood. Figure 5.9, shows Mary Anne erecting a sign stating "Future Site—SWEAT Park." She posted yard signs that were made with a relatively low budget, using construction paper, markers, foam board, tape, and wooden sticks. The visibility of these signs heightened awareness in the broader community about a tremendous need, and they used street theater tactics to get their message portrayed. Again, this is another tactic focused on the needs of the children and families, and they made effective use of common household materials from their homes.



Figure 5.10 Mary Anne McNulty, installing sign (Miller C., 1971, Parks are for Kids sign).

### **The Ribbon-cutting ceremony: making people visible**

In most downtown developments, it is rare to see people from the community participate in these highly staged events. Usually these groundbreaking events take place in downtown Milwaukee with business men, not with families in central city neighborhoods. A common practice of city officials and new businesses is to plan for a ribbon cutting ceremony for groundbreaking developments, inviting key business and community leaders to such events.

In the case of SWEAT Park, to ensure that the broader public learned about the efforts of the unemployed, Mary Anne McNulty and staff wrote a three-page news release announcing the dedication celebration of the park would take place at 1:00 p.m. on Friday, August 20, 1971 (McNulty M. A., SWEAT, Tot lot (park), n.d.). The grassroots efforts of creating a ribbon-cutting ceremony accomplished three goals, first it raised awareness to the highest level of government in

Wisconsin. Second, the inclusion of local residents (men, women and children) demonstrated the power of a grassroots effort. The juxtaposition of having ordinary residents challenging the most powerful men in municipal government garnered tremendous media attention. Finally, the organizers of SWEAT Associates were empowered to make structural changes in the physical space of the neighborhood, this feminist approach of demanding equality, to meet the needs of families, especially children.

The news release mentions how the community galvanized and constructed the park in three days. The press release was sent to male leaders in every level of government from Governor Patrick J. Lucy, to County Executive John L. Doyne, to Mayor Henry Maier, Congressman Clement J. Zablocki, and Senators Gaylord Nelson and William Proxmire to join in the celebration. The SWEAT spokesperson said, “We are sure that the public officials involved will take note of our initiative and the hard work that we have done and will pay us a just wage for our work (McNulty M. A., SWEAT, Tot lot (park), n.d.). Mary Anne and her colleagues mentioned that more notice of future projects would be announced at the grand opening, a hook to get the media and the general public interested in future projects. The press release stated, “SWEAT effort represents a unique and daring effort by the unemployed to secure an adequate earned income for themselves and their families” (McNulty M. A., U.S. Census Bureau - Office Manager, 1968). In the photo in Figure 5.10, note the gender of the individuals in the image. This photo illustrates how, yet again, the men and boys take a more significant position by dominating the front of the ribbon cutting crowd. Where are some of the women who did the work?



Figure 5.11 Ribbon cutting ceremony (Work at South Side Play Area Stops, 1971).

SWEAT Associates were adamant about inviting local residents, the men, women, and children. The neighborhood ribbon-cutting ceremony and SWEAT Associates received substantial media publicity in local and national news outlets. Their unique press release, inviting the most powerful men at all levels of government from City Hall to the Capitol in Madison, to the U.S. House of Representatives and the U.S. Senate along with the people of the neighborhood was a feminist action.

However, the ribbon cutting promoted the people of the neighborhood, and it did reinforce the practice of men [young boys] being on the front line because the young boys are depicted running through the tape. A visual reminder of how most women were, again, pushed behind the adult men and young boys. Nevertheless, at a minimum, Mary Anne organized a groundbreaking ceremony in the neighborhood for the people, not objectifying women and only having them appear in a sexist manner like other groundbreaking ceremonies of the time. Contrast how men and women were portrayed in a different groundbreaking ceremony. As the first major portions of the

Interstate freeway system opened in 1958, fifteen men surround two women who have beauty pageant sashes across their chest (Milwaukee's Freeway History, 1958). In the news story about the interstate, the two women were showcased as young beautiful women who could stand next to the urban planners of the regional transportation system, clearly being judged on their looks not on their talents.

With these strategies employed by SWEAT Associates, the successful media campaign resulted in local and national coverage, so that when the City of Milwaukee ultimately closed the park, it was criticized for being indifferent, incompetent, and uncaring towards the needs of children and families. All of this was captured by local television stations and print media. Certainly, the creation of SWEAT Park was not welcomed by all in Milwaukee. Alderman Sulkowski condemned the illegal park and any alderman who supported their action. This position resulted in a heated exchange with Alderman Braun on the floor of the Common Council Chambers. When Alderman Braun wanted to clarify what would happen next with the park, it resulted in a shouting match between the two aldermen. Alderman Sulkowski stated:

I can assure Alderman Braun that lot is going to be cleared of that junk. It will be cleared if I have to go there myself. Next time we might have some police there (Aldermen sweat over Sweat Park, 1971).

According to a news report, Alderman Sulkowski's remark about including the police to demolish SWEAT Park led to a shouting match in the Common Council chambers between Alderman Sulkowski and Alderman Braun (Aldermen sweat over Sweat Park, 1971). Alderman Braun stated:

I didn't know that Alderman Sulkowski had his own private police force. If we are going to conclude this with a show of force, I want no part of it" (1971).

Alderman Sulkowski used his powerful position on the Common Council to complain about the legality of SWEAT Park and ordered that the park be 'returned to its original state.' Of course,

Mary Anne and her colleagues thought his lack of understanding or concern for the children in his district presented a public official who was ridiculous, uncaring, and callous. Alderman Sulkowski was perceived as a person who did not care about the health and well-being of children when he asked for the park to be returned to its original condition. SWEAT organizers reaffirmed that the local elected official, Alderman Sulkowski preferred garbage and dog shit thrown back in the park.

After months of debate with the City Plan Commission, the Buildings-Grounds-Harbors Committee, and the City Attorney's office, the City of Milwaukee ordered the dismantling of SWEAT Park. Although representatives of SWEAT Associates went to different city meetings, being unfamiliar with the process of policy creation, they quickly learned the value of speaking out on issues that impacted the everyday lives of residents. After some debate on the Common Council floor, the motion passed to have SWEAT Park demolished.

Nevertheless, along with collective efficacy in the neighborhood, the gendered tactics and strategies employed by SWEAT Associates led to incredible media coverage from local and national news networks. Sadly, not much time passed from the dedication of the park on August 20, 1971 and its demolition. On November 25, 1971, a Common Council committee narrowly won on a 3-4 vote to have the SWEAT Tot lot demolished (The fall of Sweat Park - a pictorial essay- "Keep on Moving," 1971). Common Council members stated that, "SWEAT Park, a homemade tot lot developed by SWEAT Associates located at 9<sup>th</sup> and Lapham Streets should be cleared immediately." In addition, Alderman Sulkowski said:

This tot lot is not a safe place today. If the city allows this place stay in operation, we are liable by law if anyone gets hurt playing there (City panel wants sweat tot lot cleared, 1971).

For approximately three months, the children and parents had SWEAT Park in their neighborhood. Their actions of changing the physical landscape were commendable but could not withstand the power of the municipality. The following section showed how SWEAT Associates

used the action of the City of Milwaukee to emphasize a clear demarcation of how central city residents were treated.

### **The destruction of SWEAT Park**

According to organizers of SWEAT, when they heard that the City of Milwaukee's Department of Public Works was going to tear down the park, Mary Anne and her team had already created a plan for communication, a phone tree with residents and allies of the project, to turn out in opposition to the city's action. Mary Anne and fellow organizers created a formal system of communicating with friends, volunteers, and residents in case there was a crisis or emergency in the neighborhood. This open and frugal method of communication was a gendered approach. In contrast, men might call five to ten men to represent an action or a cause.



Figure 5.12 Community members and Milwaukee Police officers (The fall of Sweat Park – a pictorial essay, “Keep on Moving,” 1971).

Once the news spread about the demolition of SWEAT Park, community members gathered at the site, but they were met with a strong police presence. In Figure 5.11, this photo shows how community members who opposed the razing of SWEAT Park are restricted access by Milwaukee



Police officers. Milwaukee Chief of Police Harold Brier exercised his power and authority and made sure to let south side residents know that the Milwaukee Police Department (MPD) would keep 'law and order.' The MPD's actions made it clear to the residents that they were not allowed in the park and would be kept outside of the park they created. Again, despite all of the community's efforts to build a park, the local government used their power to deny them access to recreational space.



Figure 5.13 Community supporters of the park and Milwaukee police (The Fall of Sweat Park, 1971).

At the beginning of the march, SWEAT supporters and Milwaukee Police Department figured out a way to share the sidewalk (see Figure 5.12), but soon after a distinct clear demarcation of police authority existed, and MPD restricted access to the community by forming a human wall to the park (see Figure 5.13).



Figure 5.14 Milwaukee Police Department prevent access to SWEAT Park (The Fall of SWEAT Park, 1971).

The presence of the Milwaukee Police Department standing on guard at the vacant lot, blockading the entrance of ordinary citizens, demonstrates their power and intimidation strategies. As Saul Alinsky stated, “the real action is in the enemy’s reaction” (Alinsky, 2010). In other words, the police department’s overwhelming deployment showed how threatened the City was by SWEAT’s campaign. Furthermore, in this situation, the militarist action of the police department portrays a police department not protecting the public safety of the children. The show of force on behalf of the Milwaukee Police Department did nothing to improve community relations; if anything, it alienated and created more angst between both groups.

Ms. Sandra Eagen, aged 18, was one of about 50 members and friends who showed up immediately when the city crew arrived to tear down the park. SWEAT Park symbolized a place where residents had joined forces, they had sweated and worked to create a park; a place where the children played and parents/neighbors watched happily. Ms. Eagan was sitting on the fence when

City Forester Gordon Z. Rayner used a crowbar to pull the fence apart. “Once the nails popped out, the board flew off and Ms. Eagan tumbled backwards to the ground. The crowd began screaming at Rayner, claiming he never warned her verbally to get off the fence. However, Rayner disagreed and said he warned everyone” (Girl hurt in tot lot razing, 1971). The emotions evoked by a child falling from a fence in this case supported their collective action of taking a stand on creating a park. Ms. Eagan was later released from Johnston Municipal Hospital where she was treated for a pulled back muscle.



Figure 5.15 Mary Anne hangs the “SWEAT PARK” poem (Miller C., 1971).

In Figure 5.14, Mary Anne McNulty posts the “SWEAT PARK” poem, mocking the local alderman (Sulkowski) who complained about community activism efforts. The poem highlights the destruction of a park built by the community for the children. The poem text, shown in Figure 5.15 is important and innovative in community organizing efforts because it shows how organizers provoked a serious reaction from Alderman Sulkowski by their actions of creating the park. The response of the local elected official, Alderman Sulkowski was outrage and disgust when he learned

about the pending invoice of \$670.50 owed to SWEAT Associates. Alderman Sulkowski, who had the political privilege of participating in decisions in his district, had voted to have the tot lot removed.

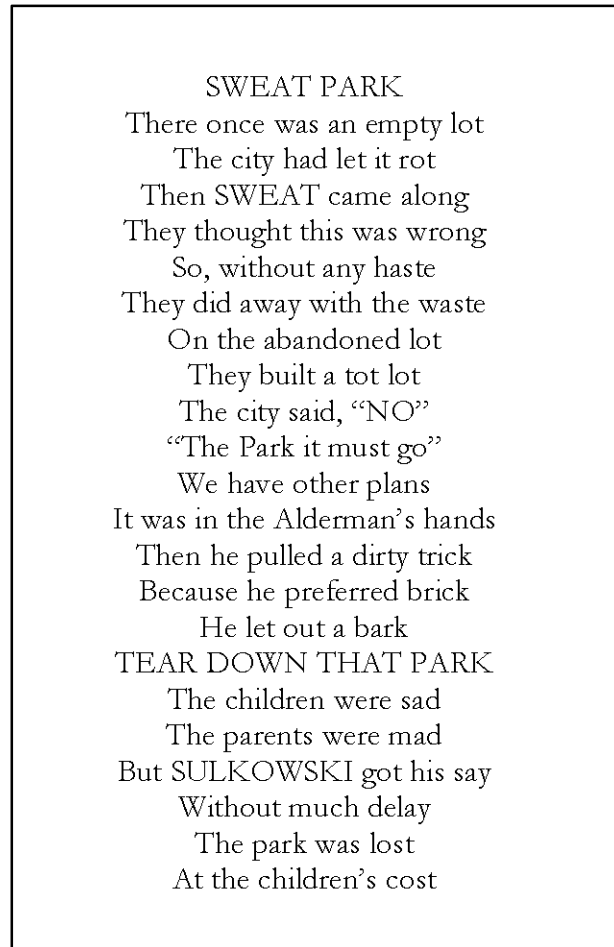


Figure 5.16 Reprinted SWEAT Park Poem (Miller C. , 1971, SWEAT Park Poem).

This poem mattered because it clearly states a message for the people in a common language evocative of children's books: That their actions were valuable but sadly, they lost to the local politician. This poster is political and feminist in that it challenges the privilege of a male public official over parents and the children, and how the destruction of the park went against family policies of protecting the children. For Alderman Sulkowski this action was not so much about a tot lot, but more about how most women who knew what the community needed: Women had

demonstrated a show of force by organizing the community. The SWEAT poem was gendered because it said much more than “don’t tear down the park,” whereas when men engaged in protests or demonstrations, most of their signs of protests had an organization’s name, a slogan, a picture or a symbol—there was not much detail (Salas & Giffey, 1966-1969). According to Mary Anne McNulty:

The hopes of SWEAT were to redefine the unemployment problem through the media. A frequent stereotype of unemployed people was there being jobs available but that they were just so lazy or too proud to do all the work. The belief of SWEAT was that no jobs were available especially for minority groups, non-high school graduates, ex-cons or women. The low paying \$2.00 per hour jobs did not begin to meet the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter for the people and their families. The unemployed were made to carry the burden of a bad job market (McNulty M. A., SWEAT, miscellaneous papers, n.d.).

Although the SWEAT Park was torn down, Mary Anne and other representatives were undaunted by the loss and continued with other projects including SWEAT Safety Patrol and SWEAT Redevelopment Authority (housing programs), Childcare Services, Recreational programs, Sanitation and Cleaning, Safety, Recycling, SWEAT University, and Elderly Programming.

### **SWEAT housing squad**

Mary Anne learned about the lack of attention from the City of Milwaukee towards absentee landlords. In response, SWEAT members created the SWEAT Safety Patrol and the SWEAT Redevelopment Authority, volunteer activist teams who inspected houses that were unsafe and had many building code violations. According to Mary Anne, Chicano and Puerto Rican SWEAT workers visited homes, talked to the residents, and viewed the many violations in rental properties. These unpaid bilingual outreach workers, who could communicate with residents in their native language, allowed SWEAT to find out all the violations and act on them. The members of the SWEAT Safety Patrol would inspect vacant and vandalized houses and board them up knowing these physical structures were dangerous and a threat to children, youth, neighbors, and fire fighters.

Mary Anne and volunteers nailed signs over broken windows and spray painted on the sign “unhealthy for children and living things” (SWEAT Tackles New Project, 1971).



Figure 5.17 This house is “Dangerous to Your Health” (Signs on Vacant Lot, 1971).

In Figure 5.16, SWEAT volunteers make and post signs for children and adults to keep out of an abandoned home. The City of Milwaukee did not board up these homes. One result of these actions was that as neighbors watched Mary Anne and her colleagues at work, they were pleased with the work and glad to see children would not be in those buildings. Soon after, the City of Milwaukee building inspectors ordered repairs to the properties identified by the SWEAT Housing Squad. The actions by the Department of Neighborhood Services (DNS) meant a tremendous success for the community; it was an example of how becoming engaged with finding solutions to the problem and holding public officials accountable could result in positive action for the

community. Boarding up unsafe houses sent a notice to residents, and to Mayor Maier and his administration, about the value of their community. As the SWEAT Housing squad talked to the elderly, they learned that the City Health Department ordered senior citizens to repair their homes. In many cases, the seniors were unable to come up with the needed cash for repairs. A representative of SWEAT stated, “The City puts great pressure on the south side senior citizens to repair their homes, but provides no resources to make the repairs, despite the fact that other parts of the city get federal grants to help them with their repairs” (Unemployed SWEAT to improve quality of life for senior citizens, 1971).

The actions of the SWEAT housing squad led to private citizens asking for SWEAT to do minor repairs of painting or puttying buildings they owned in the community (SWEAT continues work In Bay View, 1971). SWEAT Housing Squad created jobs for workers: People who empathized and identified with the plight of the unemployed were given a chance to work. Again, the attention to senior citizens, homeowners with limited mobility and limited income were a marginalized group of people that rarely received attention from local government. Again, Mary Anne’s attention towards individuals with limited English-speaking ability or older adults was an example of helping people who did not have equal access to resources because of language or age. Mary Anne reached out to individuals who lived in substandard living conditions, she included them and volunteers, helping fellow residents that they could take decisions, become involved to resolve an issue and create a better community. It is difficult to say if men would have gone the extra step of writing messages on the boarded homes like some women. According to a lead male organizer, “Men have five points for whatever they are trying to do. Women go beyond what is needed” (Eduardo, Interview, 2016).

Several key impacts that resulted from the housing campaigns were the establishment of the value of bilingual building inspectors for DNS, the new awareness of the need for boarding up

vacant and abandoned homes, and the attention to the need for housing income assistance for seniors on limited incomes. As part of this raised awareness about the elderly, Mary Anne then became part of the team that created leisure and entertainment activities for the older adults of the neighborhood by organizing field trips or by scheduling a dance for the unemployed.

### **SWEAT senior citizens enrichment**

As Mary Anne walked door to door in the neighborhood, she encountered a number of elderly with unmet needs, seeing their inability to conduct short trips for errands, lack of leisure activities, and inability to accomplish maintenance or enhancements on their properties. Most importantly, Mary Anne and SWEAT Associates found many seniors lived in isolation. To address these issues, they spearheaded efforts to create a transportation pool where seniors could get rides to doctors' offices, the grocery store, or play in bingo or sheephead tournaments (The game was called SWEAT, but it looked a lot like Bingo, 1971). Once Mary Anne identified the issues, she had to strategize all the details for each event, from transportation, to pick-up and drop-off, and collecting door prizes for tournaments.

In one action, Mary Anne and colleagues organized a field trip to the Civic Center in downtown Milwaukee. SWEAT picked up seniors at "SWEAT bus stops" along a preplanned route (Bauer, 1971). Once at the site, they met with other seniors, and they were all served coffee and donuts. In an op-ed article in *The Milwaukee Journal*, Ed. C. Miller praised the work of SWEAT:

My wife and I went along to the Civic Center. That was the first time we could visit that area and it was made possible through SWEAT—free bus service for the elderly. I think SWEAT should be paid for the great job. There is too much waste of taxpayers' money on nonsense. SWEAT makes sense and should get paid. Politicians are overpaid. SWEAT is not paid at all! (1971).

In the above article, the elderly couple share how they had never been to Milwaukee's downtown; residents of a community but outsiders within their own city. The actions of Mary Anne and SWEAT Associates resonated with Mr. and Mrs. Miller: The op-ed they wrote shows how they



were outsiders but how that sentiment changed when they engaged in a welcoming experience. The gendered labor and work of taking care of all the details for an outing, included making arrangements for transportation, securing light refreshments and hiring a musician. A common practice with most families is many women they have the responsibility of caring for their parents or senior citizens. Nakano Glenn argues that a good society could be created when “society takes care of those who lack economic, political and social power and status (2000).



Figure 5.18 Awaiting a field trip. (Bauer, 1971).

Another headline in *The Milwaukee Sentinel* stated, “SWEAT Treats Oldsters to a Lively Day Downtown,” where they took a trip to the Civic Center Plaza for drink, food, and song. In Figure 5.17, a photo from 1971, shows accordionist Jeannie Torcivia playing for senior citizens while they waited to be picked up for their field trip to the Downtown Civic Center Plaza. The accordionist also provided entertainment as they rode to the plaza in a bus provided by SWEAT Associates. One senior, Mrs. Margaret Fowler said, “I simply had a wonderful time” (SWEAT Treats Oldsters To a Lively Day Downtown, 1971). Ms. Mary Anne McNulty commented:

The service was provided so the senior citizens could go shopping, visit the museum or go to the Civic Center Plaza Concert. It was also a response to the older people's plea for cut rates for bus service during nonrush (sic) hours (1971).

Mary Anne's comments about providing a leisurely activity addressed the need for activities, but also spoke to the needs of reducing the public transit fares for seniors with limited incomes. In this instance, she capitalized on the media attention of the program for seniors stressing the need for public policy to change, a feminist approach of highlighting the inequities in the public transportation policy for the elderly who have limited incomes. Mary Anne's concern for senior citizens to find resources so they could go shopping, buy groceries, or attend civic events demonstrated how she felt responsible for the seniors' well-being but it also became an ethical issue. Mary Anne expanded the boundary of caring, by advocating or heightening awareness for the elderly because she knew they were unable to address these issues by themselves (Bastia, 2015). In addition, the image in Figure 5.17, shows the seniors, the man dressed in a suit, all women wore dresses, listened to music and were going to receive door-to-door transportation—evoking emotions of happiness and a wonderful time.

### **SWEAT unemployment ball**

Other SWEAT campaigns also addressed urban inequities and the value of social events for everyone regardless of employment or income status. Mary Anne, with other SWEAT staff, organized a dance at the Polish Alliance Hall promoting the “Join the SWEAT set.” Any person who was unemployed could enter at no charge; Mary Anne believed that low income people deserved to have fun as well. Organizing the SWEAT Unemployment Dance was a lighthearted method to bring attention to individuals who needed work but also could have fun (Unemployment Dance Planned by SWEAT Set, 1971). Although, Mary Anne managed all the details for the event, securing the venue, determining ticket prices, and managing volunteers, she wanted to ensure that the residents felt supported and treated with respect.

Typically, individuals who are unable to pay are excluded from participating in such pleasurable events. In this case, Mary Anne's connection and empathy to being an outsider inspired her to include often marginalized people in the community to what many would consider a "high class" event. Mary Anne wanted to make sure that anyone, regardless of ability to pay, should be allowed to dance. The result was poor people who did not have jobs, who had limited incomes wanted the same fun activities as everyone else—they wanted to listen to music, dance, and socialize. Again, I would argue the perspective of equality, fairness, and access to leisurely activities was just as important as the public safety concerns. These leisure activities improved the well-being of the community.

### **Creation of SWEAT State University**

An additional objective was to highlight the unequal requirements for good, high paying jobs in the City of Milwaukee. SWEAT Associates created their own institution of higher education. Often the City of Milwaukee posted employment opportunities requiring a college degree or two years in college and a high school diploma. This was a time when access to local universities was difficult, and the SWEAT organizers attempted to give honorary degrees based on the number of volunteer hours and for their experience of living in poverty. Those unemployed workers could then go back to City Hall and apply for jobs. Michael Judd, a SWEAT spokesman for this action said:

We don't think you need a college degree to survey slum houses; most of us have lived in slum houses for a long time and we are familiar with all the code violations (SWEAT Opens University After Applying for City Jobs on Monday, 1971).



Figure 5.19 SWEAT State University President (SWEAT State University, 1971).

According to the press release by SWEAT Associates:

SWEAT believes that the major purpose of the Federal Emergency Employment Act is to get unemployed poor people like SWEAT who want to work off the welfare rolls and onto the payrolls; not to provide super high paying jobs to college graduates have other options that poor people don't have (McNulty M. A., SWEAT, Recycling program, n.d.).

This tactic of creating ad-hoc institutions raised public awareness about the lack of opportunity for low-income residents to attend institutions of higher education, their inability to meet the requirements of entry level jobs and their inability to use their personal experience of addressing issues with slum housing, water pollution, or health issues (SWEAT Opens University After Applying for City Jobs on Monday, 1971). Furthermore, we can see another example of a gendered approach to organizing when SWEAT State University had a woman versus a man pictured in a cap and gown for the grand opening (see Figure 5.18). In the early 1970s, the feminist movement promoted advancing opportunities for women, who lagged behind men in all employment sectors.

### **Creation of SWEAT recycling and rescue squad**

Mary Anne and eleven workers also went door to door in the neighborhood around 10<sup>th</sup> and Lapham Streets, and they talked to residents and their children about the need to enhance the City's troubled recycling program. At the doors, they collected recyclable items and delivered them to the recycling center. A bill for the efforts of SWEAT workers was subsequently sent to the representative of the Emergency Employment Act and Mayor Maier ('SWEAT' Aids Recycling, 1971). Many families complained about their inability to get their trash to the nearest collection center, several miles away. Jack Gleason stated, "Because of high insurance costs and low incomes, few SWEAT workers have cars and transportation is sometimes a problem" ('SWEAT Aids Recycling, 1971). The SWEAT Rescue squad collected trash from homes on the south side and took it to the recycling center, the unemployed workers treated the people of neighborhood with respect, helping residents unload their trash and encourage people to recycle (Goodman, 1971).

### **Discussion: SWEAT Associates and McNulty's Activist Style**

The preceding case study of SWEAT Associates illustrates two things about Mary Anne; first, that her style of organizing was clearly feminine if not feminist; and second, that she did not allow the fact that she was an outsider, nor that she was a woman in a male- dominated world, prevent her from making an impact. She developed programs, ensuring that specific groups of individuals, whether it was the children, the senior citizens, the homeowners, or the parents, received some benefit for their involvement. These individuals who lived in low-income neighborhoods rarely received positive stories in the newspapers about their daily lives. It is only when they were included, and not treated as outsiders that their sentiments and actions were recognized.

In each of the examples mentioned above, Mary Anne provided a particular way of 'doing gender.' Her goals were to solve problems, but her methods did not mirror the process of men's

style of organizing which tends toward seeking the most efficient way with limited communication with stakeholders. In each of the programs, a clear difference between the styles of men and women organizers is visible. As Eduardo stated, “men will choose the most efficient manner whereas women will dig deeper” (interview, December 10, 2015). Mary Anne personified the strengths of communication and discussion during the process of problem solving. The newspaper articles demonstrate that time after time the involvement of community members resulted in positive outcomes.

### **The impact of SWEAT Associates**

SWEAT Park created headline news from *The Milwaukee Journal*, and *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, *Bugle-American Times*, *The New York Times*, *The National Tattler* and the *Reader's Digest*. These newspapers and magazines covered the story of how the City of Milwaukee destroyed a safe place for children to play and threatened to charge SWEAT Associates for taking over a public place without consent. In *The National Tattler*, the journalist stated, “SWEAT don’t spell out any clever phrases. The name merely stands for the perspiration the members are willing to produce in an honest day’s work” (Ramirez, 1973).

*The Milwaukee Journal* described the work of SWEAT Associates as “laudable,” but pointed out that SWEAT efforts were in violation of a Common Council resolution authorizing the seeding of the lot (Work at South Side Play Area Stops, 1971). In a subsequent headline in *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, stated, “City Threatens to Charge ‘SWEAT’ that if they took any more public lands, the group would be charged with violating a city ordinance” (1971). In the *Bugle-American* newspaper, a resident was asked his opinion about SWEAT projects and he replied, “the lot had been used as an unofficial dump for 3 ½ years before SWEAT cleared it (Goodman, 1971). A Special Edition to *The New York Times* stated, “It is one small demonstration that there are plenty of unemployed who do indeed want to work—especially on direct, sensible projects that would benefit communities

neglected by uncaring bureaucracies” (1971). Thus, even though the park was demolished, the local and national media attention garnered by the organizers resulted in a “win” for the campaign. And SWEAT went on to carry out several other campaigns that continued their work of community empowerment.

The goals of SWEAT Associates were to enrich the quality of life and level of opportunity for south side residents; to reduce the isolation and sense of usefulness of large segments of the low-income (south side) population; and to provide opportunities for people who were negatively portrayed as unskilled, untrainable, lazy, and uneducated; and an opportunity for resident volunteers to learn how their engagement could make a difference for themselves and the community. To this end, Mary Anne and team members created different life enrichment programs, raised local and national awareness about a number of urban social issues, and influenced a new cadre of women to engage and act in the Latin community. The SWEAT volunteers embodied how people can engage with the making and experiences of a place, from the creation of the park, putting up signs in vacant houses, all of these actions confirm and applaud the resilience of individuals claiming their place in the city (Sen & Silverman, 2014).

### **Inspiration for Latina activism**

Providing this case study of Mary Anne McNulty with SWEAT Associates demonstrates how she transitioned from an outsider to an ally in the Latin community over a period of time. This is evident reviewing the Mary Ann Collection, a close analysis of her resume where she worked and volunteered for and with nonprofits, schools, churches, and neighborhood groups. It was not necessarily about her building power, but rather it was based on strong relationships. All of Mary Anne’s efforts led to building strong personal relationships with friends, colleagues, and community members. Each one of the Latina activists interviewed described how Mary Anne McNulty shaped their activism efforts. Mary Anne’s reputation among Latina women was vastly different from the

competitive manner associated with men and community organizing. There was no name calling or bullying; instead it was one of acceptance, respect –and although she was once known as an outsider, Mary Anne became part of the Latina sisterhood. Antonia vividly recalled how Brian, a white kid at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic school made her feel like an outsider because she had a strong Spanish accent when she spoke. On the other hand, Mary Anne was a person who understood the multiple positions and identities of children, siblings, and parents recalled:

Mary Anne *tenia un gran corazon* (she had a big heart), she worked with non-violent youth offenders advocating for counseling and jobs instead of incarceration, she understood that many children had mental health issues (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

Mary Anne understood some of the deeply rooted systemic problems of poverty, children living without a support system, and not having advocates in mainstream institutions. Mary Anne felt compelled to work for these troubled youths. If Mary Anne saw someone in need, she was always there with a helping hand. Raquel recalled how Mary Anne’s commitment to help anyone in need began in the 1970s and continued beyond the 1980s. According to Raquel:

Fairness was Mary Anne. She brought a lot of attention to the south side, she knew what was going on, what we could do better. There were big things she cared about but sometimes it was the little things, such, making sure the garbage was picked up on the south side, helping a homeless guy daily with money, helping youth runaways, or providing shelter to an ex-gang member (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

Raquel’s description of Mary Anne shows how she was in touch with people in poverty. Mary Anne was committed to helping families who struggled with housing, young kids who felt they needed to leave their homes for a safe environment or sheltering a young man who feared retaliation from rival gang members. Similarly, Tina, an immigrant describes Mary Anne as a supportive co-worker, boss, and mentor who knew the needs and interests of the Latin community. Not only did Mary Anne identify problems, but she helped other women with solutions to issues of employment,



quality housing, accountability of slum lords, and health advocacy. Tina described Mary Anne with great empathy and understanding of being a divorced mother with two young girls. Tina stated:

Mary Anne's lesson to me was the attitude of believing in yourself and making things happen. Mary Anne understood the needs and interests of the Hispanic community, she had a great mind for the bigger picture, I worked with her side-by-side. She was a mentor, we would talk through issues all day long. We would share ideas and think of solutions. She supported me as a single mom with young children and encouraged me to advance my career. Mary Anne taught me if there is an opportunity, let's do it, let's organize (Tina, Interview, 2015).

According to Eva:

Mary Anne came highly recommended by other Latina activists such as Raquel, Claudia, Tina, Antonia, and Margarita, she was 'a Latina like' the rest of us. We associated with the activities and protests of the Latin American Union for Civil Rights, she was very involved. I looked for resources to help support my work for the first conference for Hispanic families in Milwaukee, I worked with Mary Anne (Eva, Interview, 2016).

In both cases, Tina (immigrant) and Eva (Mexican American) learned that despite their histories to Milwaukee, each one of them found the attributes of fairness, equality, and inclusion to describe Mary Anne. Raquel and Antonia emphasized Mary Anne's ability to take care of the common person on the street, and yet still fight for the resources required from local government.

## **Conclusion**

Mary Anne's experience of being the "unfamiliar" one was a story all too familiar to many of the Latinas. Mary Anne and the Latinas were all a part of Milwaukee's Latin Diaspora, all with different nationalities, broad-ranging experiences of social, political and economic situations, and their own stories of their journeys to Milwaukee. Yet they all worked in the same community, inspired to improve the quality of life for south siders in Milwaukee. For so many Latinas, Mary Anne became inspirational, because her gendered way of organizing was both interesting and appealing.

Mary Anne developed her community organizing skills by knocking on doors, talking to the residents of the neighborhood, and learning about the families and their needs in the community. The best way for an outsider to learn about a community is to meet people where they feel safest, ask a lot of questions, and listen in order to figure out the most pressing issues in the community, according to that community. In Mary Anne's log, she writes how she learned about the problems of poor people; the inadequate housing conditions, lack of jobs, women being sexually assaulted and experiencing domestic abuse, the unequal learning environments for Latino children, limited access to programs and services for the elderly, and the lack of access to higher education (McNulty M. A., "My Log", n.d.). Mary Anne believed that the solutions were important, but she also enacted the process of empowerment as equally important.

Mary Anne succeeded as an outreach worker because she listened, empathized, and made every attempt to find solutions to problems. This is a gendered quality, one that is strongly based on mutually beneficial relationships. Establishing relationships, building emotional ties is a quality that resonated with the Latina and non-Latina women in Milwaukee (Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997). I argue that Latinas empathized with Mary Anne's status of an outsider as they all shared a similar experience of initially not belonging, their Latina identity differed from white and Black females, and Black, white, or Latin males (Crenshaw, 1991; Collins, 2000; McCall, 2005; Yuval-Davis, 2006; Estrada & Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2011; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Avila, 1997).

While Mary Anne's identities were different from those of most Latinas, her particular community-oriented feminist beliefs, her attitudes and work ethic resonated with Latinas. Mary Anne personified a new and innovative approach to organizing; a gendered style. Mary Anne's status as an outsider liberated her to approach organizing with a gendered style; one of building an

emotional closeness with her friends, allies, *comadres*<sup>15</sup>, and *compadres*<sup>16</sup>. In many ways, the strength of these relationships resulted in Latinas creating a special bond with Latina activists. and learning important skills, tactics, and strategies, but most importantly the inner belief that they could make a difference in their community. Mary Anne got her “hands dirty,” and her way of thinking, doing and acting was a manner of blending theory with practice. Childers and et. al (2013), discuss how feminists who are engaged in community justice work are using theory in everyday lives, and the process can bring of a variety of emotions. These emotions range from anxieties, disappointments, and frustrations. As Moraga puts it, she grew up between two cultures, Anglo and Mexican (heavy Indian influence) where her identity was constantly shifting but she knew that she had to work and negotiate towards a more inclusive way of thinking (Anzaldúa, 2011). In many ways, Mary Anne operated between two cultures, she was white, yet she identified more with the marginalized Latino community.

Amongst many Mexican and Puerto Rican descendants, she was known as “*la güera*” (Tina interview, March 11, 2015). In some Latino families, the term *güera* is given to the family member with lighter skin tones. The term can be used in a loving way, or a hateful manner, depending on multiple factors of relationships, ethnicity, gender, class, and race (Moraga, 1997). Over time, Mary Anne became known as ‘*la güera*’ in an endearing manner. Mary Anne’s gendered style of organizing was an emotionally moving experience and differed from traditional organizing methods of building a power organization. At this point, Mary Anne was no longer considered an outsider, ‘*la guera*’ from

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<sup>15</sup> *Co-madre* means a mother-like figure in Spanish. This term is an example of a female figure taking on family-like roles in the community. A detailed explanation of how Latinas saw community organizing as an extension of the family is in Chapter 7 – Activism with “Familismo.”

<sup>16</sup> *Co-padre* means a father-like figure in Spanish, and therefore another example of a male figure taking on a family-like role in the community.

Chicago - she was recognized for using her voice for the rights of Latinos in Milwaukee (Marose, 1973).

The work of SWEAT Associates showed the Latin community about Mary Anne's ability to organize on several different issues. Despite the perception of some that she was an outsider, Mary Anne fully embraced her life in Milwaukee by working with multiple organizations and campaigns. Mary Anne developed leadership roles in countless organizations including: Walker's Point Economic Development Center, Sixteenth Street Community Health Center, Near South Side Committee for a Better Neighborhood, Milwaukee County Expressway Commission, and Latin American Union for Civil Rights. Mary Anne developed a reputation for getting things done. The board of Walker's Point Youth and Family Center recognized Mary Anne with the following:

Whereas: Ms. McNulty has developed a well-founded reputation as a dedicated, caring and skilled professional and advocate with a concern for the needs of Milwaukee's poor, minority and disadvantaged children and families (Walker's Point Youth and Family Center, n.d.).

An example of how she used her inclusive attitude in organizing was her advocacy work as the spokesperson for the Milwaukee County Expressway Commission. Mary Anne stated:

Very few received relocation benefits, no environmental impact study was completed, no landscaping and the areas underneath the freeways were wastelands, and asked if the Commission could appoint a representative to work with residents about ideas and concepts of how the land could be developed" (McNulty M. A., Committee for a Better Neighborhood - Milwaukee County Expressway, n.d.).

The Committee for a Better Neighborhood (CBN) chose Mary Ann to be the spokesperson to address the issues of blight and disregard in the neighborhood. The CBN group was another instance of Mary Anne and residents who were thinking of solutions for Milwaukee. Today, throughout Milwaukee, consideration is now planned for the underutilized spaces of freeways and bridges: Murals from local artists are depicted underneath freeways, the space is used for

neighborhood parking, recreational spaces for children and families, pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths and in some cases illuminated to attract visitors.

Although all these issues were part of developing the community, the issues that were near and dear to her heart were those issues focused on women and children. Mary Anne's heart and compassion were for youth. In every organization, a common thread is with young people, whether it is dealing with education, housing, recreation, or mental health.

The following chapter shows how Mary Anne's approach to organizing in the community was refreshing for Latinas, and how, when she built relationships throughout the community, she created an emotional bond. This friendly and open communication style resonated with Latinas, and as Latinas continued to see Mary Anne's commitment to youth and families, it inspired them to build on their own future work.

Mary Anne McNulty's arrival in Milwaukee coincided with many Latinas' coming to Wisconsin: Raquel's family moved yearly from Texas to Wisconsin to work in the agricultural fields; Gladys' family escaped political turmoil in Panama; Daniela immigrated from El Salvador fleeing their civil war; Marisol came with her family to escape the violence and civil war in Colombia; Paulina and Eva, two U.S. born Mexican Americans, worked on social justice issues from behind the scenes. This snapshot of Mary Anne and some of the Latinas because they were all a part of Milwaukee's Latin Diaspora, all with different ethnicities, broad-ranging experiences of social, political and economic situations. All of them were outsiders but they had a common characteristic, they all worked in the same community inspired to improve the quality of life for south siders in Milwaukee. For Latinas, the story of Mary Anne McNulty is significant because it provides evidence of how she became influential and inspirational because the gendered way of organizing. Like many other American communities of the era, Milwaukee's south side Latina activists were working on

making a difference in their own communities, seeking the best way to make a difference, but to do so in their own way perhaps - to leverage the feminine in gendered activism.

## Chapter 6

### Perspectives from Latina and Non-Latina Centered Activism

I am in this tremendous struggle with myself to change. I do not deserve this award. I have the 'I come last syndrome.' I am a work in progress. I had a low point in my life—I used to fight over the use of disposable or cloth diapers. I want to disclose and share information, not give advice. Please recycle this paper.  
**I DESERVE THIS TREAT, TODAY, AND EVERY SINGLE DAY.**

Figure 6.1 Collecting thoughts. (Lucy, Wisconsin Women's Network Annual Conference Program, n.d.).

On a May evening in the late 1990s, Lucy waited with anticipation at the Wisconsin Minority Women's Network Annual Conference luncheon where she was going to be the recipient of the Woman of Achievement Award. On the back of the program (see Figure 6.1), Lucy wrote some of her thoughts and feelings prior to the acceptance of the award. It appears that she was trying to gather her thoughts for an acceptance speech, moments before she appeared at the podium. Reading Lucy's scribbles on the back of the program, I felt appreciation for the woman who had been recognized, and for Lucy's commitment and service toward the improvement of life for all women. Although she was being recognized for her years of service in the community, her comments about "coming last" or "being a work in progress" are her private thoughts of how she accomplished all the work in the community by concentrating on the needs of others before her own. Lucy's raw emotions of self-doubt, being critical of herself, and desire to improve other people's lives show how and why community organizing matters. Not only did community organizing improve her life, but she had "a wider" impact by improving the lives of families and her own children. Lucy accomplished so much in her life, the neighborhood, and the City of Milwaukee, and she did all this while balancing motherhood and working within a male-dominated society. This award spoke volumes because it showed a woman with tremendous fortitude, resilience, and persistence.

The ground-breaking work of Latinas who organized, who were the first to be appointed or selected to work in schools, government, business or nonprofit organizations, required these women to be assertive, negotiate challenging situations, and find a support system. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, nearly every industry was dominated by men; from public office, to the church, to nonprofit organizations, to the public-school system, to business corporations, and in the field of community organizing. Women encountered issues of gender inequality, lower pay, unsupportive and implicit bias and stereotypes by some men. Not only did they face these issues outside of the home, but for many Latinas they encountered cultural practices in a patriarchal system where some women were overloaded with the responsibilities of caregiving. Latinas organized in every sector of Milwaukee's community with the hopes that other women and their children could pursue higher aspirations.

Given that most of the leadership roles were male-centric, it was noticeable and welcoming when women were elevated into leaders in their profession. Although many of the same characteristics can be attributed to men and women, a different gendered style of leadership resonated with Latinas interviewed in this study. As Latinas entered the field of building community, some common themes arose: Finding your voice and speaking out for the interests of self or the community; navigating and negotiating the intersections of race, class, gender and ethnicity; and how mastering the skills of organizing required a commitment of long hours. Latina women were learning and breaking into unfamiliar leadership roles. The belief system outlined above resulted in Latinas being galvanized into action, developing leadership skills, finding and using their voice to work on issues concerning women and children.

As Latina women raised their children, and built their community, it was in their self-interest to participate in issue campaigns that were near and dear to their hearts. This is a central tenet of community organizing: Uncovering and finding one's personal interests, focusing on the needs of



self, immediate family or the community. This idea of community organizing or organizing the community (Stall, 1998) shows how taking action accomplishes both theories. The Latina activists demonstrated qualities: Leadership, voice, taking action, and inclusion of the broader community. All of these skills are necessary for any organizing campaign. Latinas across the spectrum, notwithstanding if they were from Milwaukee's south side, Puerto Rico, Colombia, Mexico or Panama, worked to improve the lives of children and families.

In this chapter, I tell the stories of the activist women I interviewed. Their stories show, first, the obstacles women, especially Latinas, faced in entering male-dominated urban institutions in the 1970s in Milwaukee. Second, Latinas' stories tell us how they adopted community organizing strategies to address such obstacles, along the way learning from Latino activists, developing leadership skills, and finding their voices. The latter involved confronting not only sexism, but also whiteness and Latina invisibility in urban institutions, and donating their labor by volunteering for Latina causes. Last, I show how Latina community organizing, especially on issues such as educational reform, programs for youth and women, housing, and domestic violence, made a difference in Milwaukee by contributing to policy changes that benefited not only Latinas but low-income people throughout Milwaukee.

### **Male-Dominated and White-Woman Influenced Society**

You know it was a man's world back then. If you look at who the leadership was in different places, it was a male, the men had always been in charge, it's not that women did not participate, they just weren't the titular leaders (Nicole, Interview, 2015).

Nicole grew up in a middle-income Mexican American household and considered herself a feminist. Latina and non-Latina women interviewed in this study recognized how men were the outward leaders in society. Whether it was at City Hall, the Parish Rectory, the Milwaukee Public

School Superintendent's office, or storefront office spaces of grassroots coalitions, women understood the male influence in every aspect of their lives.

### **The male and white face of municipal government**

Since the mid-1830s, men have been in leadership roles developing Milwaukee as the major municipality between Chicago and Green Bay. In the formative years, Milwaukee's leadership was dominated by men who organized land sales, created diverse businesses, and managed the formation of a metropolis (Gurda, 1999). The incorporation of Milwaukee led to a formalized system of having representatives for all the citizens, creating a department to regulate sanitation, housing development, water, social services and all were mostly led by men. As a municipality, the male leadership led major manufacturing and business ventures in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century (Anderson & Greene, 2009; Leavitt, 1982). The role of women who were instrumental and part of increasing Wisconsin's women's roles in municipal government are depicted in *On Wisconsin Women* by Genevieve G. McBride (1993). McBride adds stories about how women worked on alliance building, the suffrage movement and social reform efforts to the scholarship on Wisconsin's history (McBride, 2009). Eventually, women were allowed to vote on June 10, 1919, with the passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment. Throughout the formative years and well into the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, women have been involved on the edges of municipal government. It is only until 1965, that the first woman and African American was elected to serve on the Common Council for City of Milwaukee<sup>17</sup>. Since 1965, at least one woman has been a representative in city or county government at all times. I did not have the opportunity to interview any current female public officials, but I drew on the stories of women interviewed about obstacles and challenges some of the interview

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<sup>17</sup> In 1965, Vel Phillips was the first woman and African American elected to serve the City of Milwaukee.

participants faced when they began working for the City of Milwaukee, and a collection of interviews from the Milwaukee Women's Policy Networks Oral History project (Boles, 1990).

The first Latinas and non-Latinas who were selected for government positions with Mayors or Governors, shared how they were questioned or criticized for their appointment. Some women I interviewed recalled the harassment and discrimination that took place from people within the pan-Latino community, by complete strangers, and by staff at a local private club (Eva, Interview, 2015; Vicky, Interview, 2015). Vicky recalled staffing an event for Governor Earl with labor representatives at the University Club and being told she was told by the *maître d*, "you don't understand, women are not allowed here so get out." I will say more about this later in this chapter but it shows how the treatment of women working in government permeated outside government buildings and into places and spaces of official government gatherings.

Regarding another incident in the 1990s, one of the Latinas recalled how breaking new territory of being a woman, and non-white person provoked some people to send hate mail. For example, one letter stated, "you people breed like cockroaches and you don't deserve this position" (Raquel, Interview, 2015). In the 1990s, there were not yet any policies for promoting or addressing intimidation or harassment at the workplace. Instead, Raquel shared how she created a support system, believed in herself and stayed on the job for two years. Both of these incidents are occurred in the past thirty years and demonstrate some of the challenges of women entering the field of municipal government. In the past 172 years, only fourteen women have been elected to serve on the Common Council for the City of Milwaukee. To get a sense of women working in government, Janet Boles interviewed over twenty females in nonprofit leadership positions, elected officials in city and county government, along with appointed positions. The following are some excerpts from Alderwoman Vel Phillips and the difficulties of being the first and only woman on the Common Council in 1956.

Vel shared in her interview with Janet Boles how she did not fit in with the boys' network and some of the men on the Common Council thought a welcoming experience for her would be to bond and build relationships with their spouses. Vel explained, the assumptions of her male colleagues about how she should could bond with their wives because she did not fit in with the 'all-male-led' Common Council network (Phillips, 1990). According to Janet Boles interview, Mrs. Vel Phillips shared how uninformed they were about race and gender issues between Black and white women. Just because she was a woman, did not mean she could relate to or bond with the spouses of her colleagues. First, she was Black, the first to graduate from the University of Wisconsin-Madison-Law School in 1951, and the first woman to win a seat on Milwaukee's Common Council, and she was forced to deal with their antics and bigoted comments at work. Needless to say, Mrs. Vel Phillips had her sights on some of the bigger policy issues of the time and was not looking for socializing events with the spouses of the alderman.

Although she was a leader in fighting for Open Housing legislation, she first had to fight for City Hall to be equipped with restrooms for women. In the mid-1950s, City Hall had no restrooms for women. Alderwoman Vel Phillips was pregnant at the time and supposed to use a restroom in the rear of the Common Council Chambers. She used the closest Men's Room and was criticized by the all men council and Alderman Hundt ordered a sign that read "Men Only." Alderwoman Vel Phillips stood her ground stated, "I am part of the council and I expect to have a public restroom at City Hall" (Phillips, 1990). Vel, a pioneer for women, not only was advocating for the needs of the community, but also had to advocate for personal issues of women. In all these descriptions, Alderwoman Vel Phillips shares the implicit bias and stereotypes of women, unequal treatment based on gender, and how she encountered a hostile work environment because of prejudicial city policy and practice.

Similar experiences of discrimination happened to women who wanted to join the Milwaukee Police Department. Women who applied to join the MPD were required to meet specific requirements for eligibility including: Age restrictions, weight – (in proportion to age and height), sound physical condition, excellent moral character, temperamentally suited, and could not have children under the age of 14 years of age. The training and duties of police women were restricted to investigation and handling of cases that dealt with women and children, so women usually worked in the Youth Aid Bureau or Vice squad (Isabel, 2015). Isabel, an Italian-American in her 20s, shared the following experience during the candidate selection process with MPD:

I passed my medical and then I had to be interviewed by a panel of all guys of course, business people and Milwaukee Police Chief Breier. All white men. It was 1963. I was on the eligibility list. Somehow, I made it on the force (Isabel, Interview, 2015).

Isabel was one of the first twelve women to join the MPD and she recalled struggling to have the same opportunities as white men within MPD. At the time, there was no policy on how to treat the men in sexual assault cases and often times women were blamed for the incident. I will share more on this during the discussion of advocacy against domestic violence.

Dalia, a Polish American described how the ostensible leaders, with her father, Mayor Maier, Police Chief Brier, and the local priest would have weekly breakfast at her south side home. Dalia had to serve them and “we [me and my sister] were sworn to secrecy and could never talk about what they talked about” (Dalia, 2015). This oppressive action of the most powerful men in Milwaukee, including her father, shows how young women were treated unequally; how she had to conform to the roles of servitude, obedience, loyalty, and domination by men. The dynamics of having young daughters serve and be attentive was not surprising but Dalia felt bad and a bit exploited. In my interview with Dalia she expressed that feeling uncomfortable about being sworn to secrecy about the conversations in her home. These men violated her understanding of religious

practices, her spiritual well-being, and skewed her understanding of how a law enforcement official and her father were supposed to protect her, especially in her own home. Unfortunately, Dalia, a devout Catholic, to this day even though these men have since passed on, Dalia carries the oath of secrecy under the fear of God.

### **The challenges of masculinist religious institutions**

By the early twentieth century in Milwaukee, there were over fifteen Roman Catholic Churches, and nearly a dozen Lutheran churches, and all were presided over by men (Gurda, 1999). The prevalence of the church was significant because persons of the Polish, German and Latino communities found their spiritual beliefs in the local churches. Perhaps more important was their existence as co-ethnic social institutions led by religious men. It was widely believed that “men laid the foundations for the moral and spiritual uplift of souls” (Borun, 1946). The religious men symbolized a motivating force for the development of churches from St. Hyacinth, St. Stanislaus, St. Vincent’s, St. Josaphat’s, SS. Cyril and Methodius, St. John Kanty’s, St. Adalbert’s, and St. Alexander. Many of these flourished, each one raising the necessary funds, acquiring materials for the construction of churches, acquisition of ornamental work, oil paintings, marble sculptures or crucifixes. On many of websites about the histories of churches in Milwaukee, a description of male immigrants working on the design and construction, painting, and plasterwork of the church (The Basilica of St. Josaphat, n.d.). The grandeur of Milwaukee’s churches is captured with the history and beauty of buildings, focusing on the male architects (Zimmerman, 2009) but little information is known about the role of women in the churches and the formation of those communities. Religious women were integral to the church, serving as teachers in the classrooms, while lay women became more involved in parish councils, decorating the church for Holy days of obligation, organizing bake sales and school supply drives, and teaching catechism, the principles of the religious doctrine for the children (Dalia, Interview, 2015; Paulina, Interview, 2015; Tina, Interview, 2015).

Paulina, a Mexican American in her 40s described herself as a benevolent Catholic who “went to church every Sunday morning, made sure all of her children received Christian formation,” appreciated and knew the integral nature of the church in everyone’s lives became active in organizing activities in the 1980s. It was the church where people would go if they needed to find a job, talk about problems with the priest, or receive food or clothing donations. Paulina recalled her tremendous faith and great spirituality were inspired by her *‘madrecita y abuela* (mother and grandmother) and how she believed “their faith could move mountains” (Paulina, Interview, 2015). Although the Catholic Church played a significant role in spiritual and community building efforts, the attitude and reaction of some religious men when they learned about domestic violence situations between men and women was disheartening and disappointing. The power of the spiritual leaders who used church teachings and advocated for women to stay in marriage despite being physically or emotionally abused shows how some religious men tolerated or knew about abusive marriages. Paulina advocated for the creation of a task force on domestic violence in the mid 1980s which eventually led to the creation of the Latina Resource Center (Paulina, Interview, 2015).

Women from different ethnic and racial backgrounds were empowered to speak out against domestic violence and collaborated with other women to build a support system, ending physical and emotional suffering. To a lesser degree than the physical violence, emotional anxiety was caused within educational settings when Latina activists encountered unfriendly environments with all-white female staff because of their education reform efforts.

### **Erasing the Latina vacuum in educational institutions**

Latina and non-Latina activists I interviewed told me that over forty years ago, most senior leadership positions in administration at the district or school level were male-dominated and within the classrooms were led by white females (Pablo, Interview, 2015). Throughout the interviews, I

learned women's activist work was more inclusive. Raquel, a child farmworker recalled being only 19 years old, serving as a translator for the all-white female teaching staff at Vieau Elementary School, and how she faced backlash because she organized a parent meeting with 20 Spanish-speaking parents and the principal. Raquel had organized the parents, discussing the needs of the community and then faced angry white female union stewards who disrupted the meeting and demanded the principal to answer their questions. Although Raquel was only 19 years old, she organized all parents, English speaking and Spanish speaking, and asked for a meeting with the white male administrator. This quality of being inclusive and building relationships with parents of children erased the vacuum of leadership within the school. Raquel recalled:

Well that was the start of it all. Teachers would not speak to me anymore, I am a teacher's aide, I only lasted one year because the dynamic was not good (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

The union stewards, employees of the school district who represents and defends the interests of their fellow employees, disrupted a meeting with parents and a teacher's aide, when in fact the meeting was to address concerns or assistance needed with instruction in the classroom with non-English speaking children. The power of union representatives and their perceiving the new immigrants as a threat, is a microcosm of the earlier collision of diasporas taking place between the Anglo and the Hispanic communities and shows how these white female representatives showed a lack of respect to Raquel, a young Latina female organizer. Raquel remembers the unfriendly environment in the classroom after the meeting with parents; the teachers gave her a cold shoulder, some would not speak to her, and another would make a snide comment such as, "some people have a lot of nerve" (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

Raquel understood the circumstances of immigrant families, since she grew up with a similar situation: Working in the agricultural fields with her mother and siblings, falling behind in school due to gathering the harvest and missing the first few weeks of school. For Raquel, the issue of



migrant children in the urban school setting was personal and she organized the children and families to stand up for themselves. The actions of Raquel did matter, not only for herself as a young woman, but she knew that because of her bilingual ability she could connect with the parents who were migrant workers and lived with constant change. Raquel's concern for kids motivated her to take action: She wanted to make sure children received a quality education, and she knew that could make a difference in the lives of the children and their parents. Raquel mentioned that taking action can be an uncomfortable feeling, but she did it for the rights of the parents and children. Standing up for the rights of parents and children, Raquel understood that with her actions, she was perceived as a threat to the majority white staff in the school (Raquel, Interview, 2015). Throughout the process of organizing parents and children, Raquel consulted with the male leadership of the Latin American Union for Civil Rights (LAUCR), a Latin civil rights organization in Milwaukee which aimed at eliminating racial and ethnic discrimination in education, housing, and employment. Again, this is another example of Raquel reaching out to male organizing staff for their advice, opinion and asking for help. This action by Raquel was trying to address the lack of leadership with MPS about the needs of the Latin newcomers.

The realization of living in a male-and white-centric society, encouraged Latinas to become more visible and advocate for rights for their families and community. After an analysis of the central institutions in the Latin community, Latinas focused their efforts on accountability with government offices, churches and schools. The next section shows how Latinas were tired of being invisible, experienced a lack of representation within their own pan-Latino community. Thus, they learned leadership skills as they organize: Finding their voice, they created a culture of accountability, and unbeknownst to themselves were creating a community organizing apprenticeship program for women by working "around the clock."

## **Community Organizing Efforts**

Within the Latino Diaspora, Latino men were instrumental, pioneers in forming grassroots organizing groups. They were on the front lines of a number of different initiatives, from organizing farmworkers, to bilingual education, open housing initiatives, and welfare reform (Rodriguez, M., 2011). Latinas and non-Latinas shared how men dominated most local and national organizing campaigns, whether it was Saul Alinsky in Chicago's ghetto, to Fr. Groppi and the Youth Commandos with Open Housing, and Lloyd Barbee with desegregation efforts in Milwaukee Public Schools, and Cesar Chavez with the farmworker movement (Alinsky, 2010; Dougherty, 2004; Garcia, 2012; Jones, 2009). These efforts were all led by men. A similar circumstance in Milwaukee with many Latino men forming different groups, which were dictated by male leadership.

### **Negotiating visibility within the Pan-Latino diaspora**

Many women spoke in an affectionate manner of the nurturing and mentoring they received from Latino male organizers when they started organizing in the early 1970s. My Latina interview participants shared how Latinos nurtured and mentored them about strategies and tactics with organizing. Despite such support for Latinas, the men – according to my interview participants – maintained uneven gendered power relations. Latinas stated the men were always in front, 'protecting us [Latinas]' and we were behind them. Although women were part of organization, the men were the central figures in decision-making. During the late 1970s-1980s, male organizers and leaders recruited women to become associates of mobilizing the community but Latina activists expressed reoccurring challenges of male domination when the Milwaukee Latin population began to increase. Below are some descriptions from three Latinas who were all U.S. citizens, Antonia a Puerto Rican and Eva and Nicole who were both Mexican Americans:

Although there were a significant number of women, I remember Oscar, Carlos, and the Torres brothers, the overall leadership was driven by the male Chicanos that came from the Southwest" (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

The LAUCR organization was male dominated, I tried to get involved at the time but I did not see any role for women in that organization (Eva, Interview, 2016).

If you want to do research of the Alinsky leadership trainings, you will find they were all men, white males—like the founders of this country but not all property owners” (Nicole, Interview, 2015).

These quotes from Latina activists show how the issues of unequal access to leadership positions, lopsided decision-making power, and other gender inequities persisted within the Latin Diaspora. If Latina activists spoke out against the male leaders, they wondered if there would be any backlash from the male organizers. Still, they also recognized the male organizers were more supportive than their own male family members. Latina activists had to balance and negotiate so many dynamics as they took on more leadership roles in the church, in the neighborhood, or the school.

Raquel’s story exemplifies this complicated situation on how she valued the opinions of her male colleagues but felt disempowered at times because a Latina might have handled the discourse differently if she was in charge. In 1972, Raquel, a young Mexican American consulted with the male organizers of the Latin American Union for Civil Rights (LAUCR) about the untenable situation at Vieau School. The Latinos mentored and guided her stating, “don’t start anything else the white administration and teaching staff will see the need” (Raquel, Interview, 2015). Latina activists were in an extremely complex situation, confronting issues with the public-school system, advocating for Latino parents, and getting advice from the male mentors from a grassroots organization. The men of LAUCR and other grassroots organizing campaigns were incredible resources and allies for Latina women, but Latinas deferred to the men in decision making, a characteristic they began to address in the future.

Latina activists learned that community organizing was a vehicle to help each one of them build their identity in a Pan-Latino diaspora. Each of the Latinas interviewed shared their desires

and motivations of wanting to make a difference for their families and community. Latina women learned how to create and build their identity by standing up for their rights and the rights of the community. In this process of speaking for their self-interest versus their family each one gained valuable leadership skills. On many of the issue campaigns, Latinas learned about perseverance, persistence and tenacity in community organizing. As Latinas organized, they found their voice recruiting other women and men to join the cause but more importantly they confronted the difficult dialogues in ‘white dominated institutions, programs, or public spaces’ (Eva, Interview, 2016). Latinas questioned why the Latin community did not receive certain services, and how living within the historic Black-White paradigm of Milwaukee was no longer acceptable. Latinas confronted white privileged males and females, understanding how this manifested, within mainstream institutions, and in the public realm. All of these difficult dialogues of increasing the visibility of Latinos required constant negotiation and compromise in the mainstream and Latino community. For most of the community, the increased visibility of Latinas was breaking from cultural traditions and considered uncharted territory.

### **Lack of representation**

The headline news of Women Unite (see Figure 6.2) shows the interest of women to create a place in the community where they could begin to discuss the lack of representation in the community. The awareness about the lack of representation is how and why Latinas organized themselves. Latina and non-Latina women coalesced to develop their own leadership skills and formed the Women’s Role Caucus (WRC) in 1971. The lead organizers of the WRC were a diverse group of women, Latinas and non-Latinas, who wanted to ensure dialogue between many women.



Figure 6.2 Article on first WRC meeting (The Women Unite, 1971).

In Figure 6.2, is a clipping of an article on the Women's Role Caucus (WRC) meeting to exchange ideas, discuss woman politics, and other relevant general issues. The WRC had a planning meeting in November 1970 with its first official meeting on January 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1971 with over sixty women. They divided into three main groups to discuss women and politics, daycare centers and Latin women in general (The Women Unite, 1971). At this initial meeting, they were divided into groups to discuss relevant issues. Some of the demands listed by many women were: 1) Representation of women on the leadership of organizations in the Latin community to reach a goal of at least a one-third membership; 2) Preservation of Latin culture in the family be done by mother and father; 3) Requesting the husbands/partners to include most women in their lives, Latin and Anglo, in all the activities of the community, so that both can participate equally in solving community problems, that both work together, not one in front of the other.

Latinas and non-Latinas joined forces and shared their opinion about being at the table for important decisions. Latina women were frustrated over having the sole responsibility for instilling,

preserving, and promoting the Latin culture in their families and communities. Why did the men not see this teaching of culture and ethnic identity as their responsibility as well? I will share more about the different beliefs between Latin men and women in a subsequent chapter where I provide greater depth of information on the gendered divisions in community organizing campaigns. In my interview with Eduardo, a Chicano who mentored many of the Latina activists in the 1970s and 1980s, he noticed a noticeable difference between men and women in community organizing.

Eduardo explained:

Women are more outspoken, they express themselves than men, they are more vocal than men. They express themselves better and often. Men go by feelings, men can look at you and estimate what to do. Women dig out more. The woman's job was to work with the family, work with the kids in the homes. There are two different things going on. Men have five points or whatever they are trying to find out. Women go beyond what is needed (Eduardo, Interview, 2016).

In my interview with Eduardo, I was struck by his candor about the differences that he recognized between men and women. He spoke in a positive manner about the qualities of women of building relationships, sharing more information, and not making assumptions. Eduardo seems to speculate that given the multiple roles and responsibilities of motherhood and caregiving for the family that women embody a capacity to handle more than a man. Eduardo goes on to share his experience and opinions about men limiting information and details. In the end, Eduardo affirms and states how women activists were more inclusive, communicative, detailed, and accommodating to the needs of women and their multiple roles as caregivers and mothers.

Being at the intersection of gender, cultural customs, and traditions, Latinas, and non-Latinas, challenged the status quo, and with newly formed group, created a sense of pride and unity. These women demanded that men and women had to work together, not necessarily “one in front of the other” (The Women Unite, 1971). Finally, the last demand speaks volumes about most

women's weariness of being behind the men, literally and figuratively. Latina and Anglo women had ideas and wanted to be part of changing and improving the community.

Latinas knew that one method of creating awareness about their concerns or issues was writing newspaper articles and opinion pieces and, in some cases, creating different community organizations. For many of the Latinas they were unfamiliar and sometimes uncomfortable under the spotlight or speaking to some large groups of people or media, they stepped up to the challenge of representing the Latin community but especially to be role models for other women. The next sections show the power and influence of a printed manuscript.

### **Latinas speak out—in print**

As Latinas voiced their opinion with the formation of different groups from the *Las Mujeres Unidas para el Progreso Latino* (Women United for Latino Progress) to the *Fuerza Feminina* (Power of Feminists), women began to write and publish articles about sexism, racism, and discrimination. Below is one article from an unknown author about the exploitation, racism of colonizers, and *Taino* Indians (first people of Puerto Rico). The article is an example of how Latinas understood the intersections of race, gender, class, and ethnicity.





indigenous race and illustrates how she will face not only prejudice based on skin-color, but additional discrimination because of her gender (Bonilla-Silva, 2003).

These examples show how the Latina activists took an intersectional perspective on how women had to be in front of problems in the community. The next section provides excerpts of oral histories of Latina activists who talk about their perspective on the necessary work and their leadership skills gained. Many women shared how they engaged in the work because in their minds the work had to be done, no matter the obstacles, complications, or frustrations. They were determined to improve the living conditions for themselves and others, demonstrating that Latina community organizing did and does make a difference in Milwaukee.

### **Learning leadership skills**

For most of the Latina activists, when they identified an issue in the school, in the neighborhood, or at work, they worked to raise awareness of that problem in the community. Nevertheless, such works and increased awareness did not mean that the representatives in different institutions responded in hours, days, or even weeks. The notion of building a coalition of people to see the value of completing a project to the end is one of the most important elements in organizing. In the early 1970s, few local women on Milwaukee's south side had demonstrated leadership in addressing the inequities of financial resources and programs for the Latin and Polish communities. Many of the Latinas shared how they were inspired, influenced or galvanized into action after they saw the work of Mary Anne with SWEAT Associates and her countless other organizing efforts. Claudia recalled observing the work and diligence of Mary Anne with SWEAT Associates and how it inspired her to be compassionate, discipline, and develop a strong work-ethic. Claudia, was a young mother who identified as Puerto Rican and Mexican when she met Mary Anne in the 1970s and said:

Mary Anne was a role model. She showed us you could be anything you want to be, I don't care who you are. If you have the education, the guts and determination, you

can do anything and don't feel bad about it. You must grab the opportunity” (Claudia, Interview, 2016).

Latina women could see for the first time a woman, albeit a white woman, who stood up for the community and confronted the male-dominated leadership in the City of Milwaukee. Mary Anne was not intimidated by men in powerful positions; on the contrary, she made sure these so-called leaders were held accountable for not meeting the needs of the entire community, especially the Latino community. All this work was learned behavior, Latinas learned by doing, or on the job training. Mary Anne taught them how to break tradition: Latinas learned how to organize and take action.

The attitude toward creating change was a quality that resonated with many women and some became interested and involved in some common issues. One of them was the creation and organization of the *Centro Cultural Educativo – Chicano Boricua* (CCE-CB) school in 1971. At CCE-CB, Antonia credits being mentored and influenced by Mary Anne on effective strategies and tactics for working on campaigns to secure bilingual education and recalled:

The fight for bilingual education took over my life. It was grassroots and Mary Anne taught me that we needed committee meeting, meetings with school board members, provide testimonies at school board hearings and meet parents in their homes to talk about the campaign (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

Antonia, a *Puertorriqueña* (Puerto Rican) from the island recalled her formative years of organizing and campaigning for bilingual and bicultural programs at the CCE-CB was all consuming. In this case, she agreed with the practice of Saul Alinsky that the time required to successfully recruit and strategize did require work 24 hours a day-seven day a week. At the time she was single and in her 20s, so she could spend most of her time organizing parents, students and community members. The CCE-CB school, an accredited high school program for Latin youth who were not attending or not achieving in Milwaukee Public Schools operated from 1971 to 1975. For many of the Latinas

working for bilingual education was the “right thing to do or it had to be done” (Antonia, Interview, 2015) and no one else was doing the work. Nancy Naples research supports this argument of community workers in local struggles are the ones who understand and know the issues because they have encountered injustices (Naples, 1991, 2014).

A distinct finding from the interviews was how some women developed leadership skills despite being in difficult situations in mainstream society. First and foremost, Latinas gained the skill of finding their voices, asking individuals they tried to organize about their interests, scheduling meetings and building consensus for solutions to problems. Throughout the entire process, Latinas realized they had to be in leadership roles. They had to be at decision-making tables and achieving that required recruiting women to be spokespersons, organizers and/or writing articles in local newspapers.

Latinas came together because they knew their needs were different from the Hispanic males or white women. Culturally speaking, Latinas followed strong cultural traditions of being subservient, docile and being the primary caregivers in families. For Latinas to be noticed, they had to intensify their efforts, because they were still the major caregivers in the family, yet the added social justice efforts to their list. As Latinas worked on issues of fairness in the workplace, they learned how to negotiate, compromise and build coalitions, eventually finding their voice and created a new process for building Milwaukee’s Latino community. One of the first issues Latinas engaged was the right to employment and fair wages.

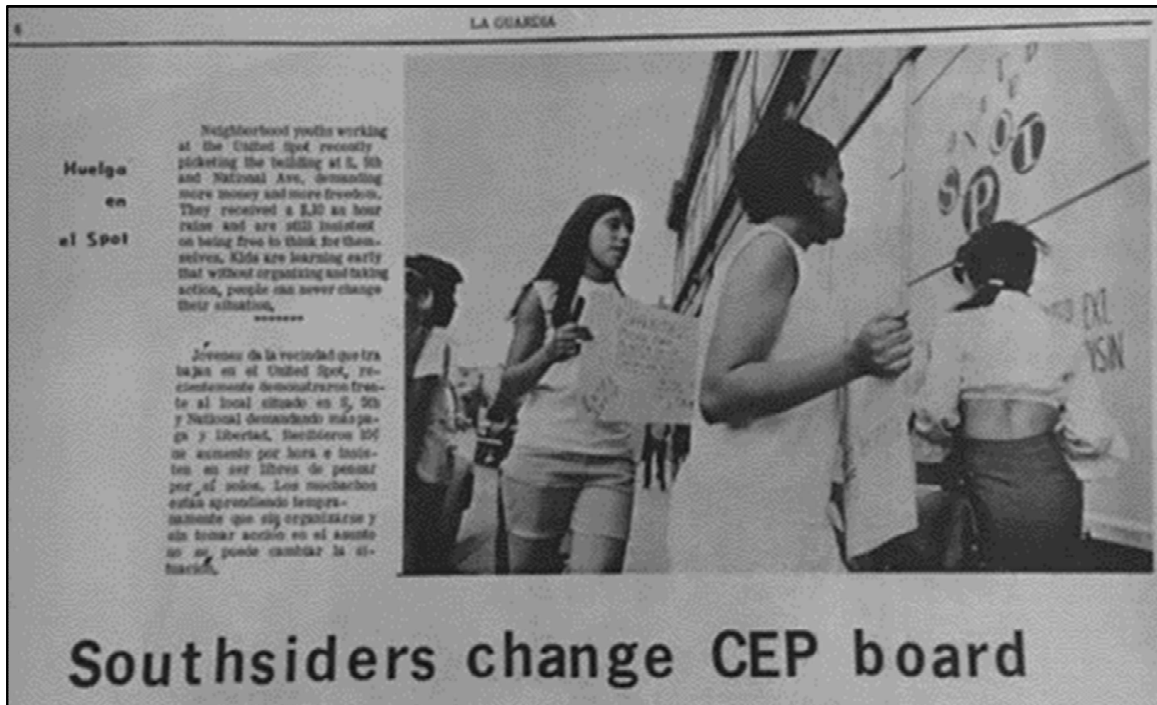


Figure 6.4 Latina youth workers walking the picket line at "the Spot" (Southsiders change CEP board, 1969).

The young women at “the Spot” (today known as the United Community Center), demanded to have their voices heard within the nonprofit organization and were tired of not being able to speak their opinions and thoughts (see Figure 6.4). They wanted to think for themselves and gain independence on the job. The above image of young Latinas marching in front of a nonprofit organization illuminates women and the issues of importance to them. Where are the men? Why are they not present supporting some women on these campaigns? It is difficult to say exactly why the men were not present at the march, but it does raise the question about the differences of gender, employment and wages. This was a time when women were working outside of the home and becoming liberated. The presences of young Latinas protesting a successful nonprofit organization for the Latin community took tremendous fortitude and courage. Again, another example of how this protest was building the leadership skills of women.

*Las Mujeres Unidas para El Progreso Latino* (Women United for Latino Progress) formed to teach Puerto Rican and Mexican culture to children, since they were (and are) denied any of their

history in Milwaukee Public Schools or day camps in the community. According to the mothers, their children had to develop their own identity, understanding of themselves, so they would be better prepared to deal with the outside world (*Las Mujeres Unidas para El Progreso Latino*, Women United for Latino Progress, 1971). Raquel, a young woman from Puerto Rico, missed the cultural traditions of the island and bonded with other Latinas when they spoke about organizing and preserving cultural practices. Raquel stated:

We did not want them to forget who they were and wanted pride instilled in them and what we did was the whole academic component in reading and writing and the cultural stuff with music and dance, arts. We had *baile folklórico* (folk dance), lots of arts projects, kids performed at different events (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

The campaign to build cultural identity among Puerto Rican and Mexican children were attributes instilled by Latina activists in the mid-1970s. Latinas knew that if they organized a day camp where they could work with each other to create lesson plans it would be best for the children. As Latinas became more engaged in fighting for issues regarding themselves and their children, they noticed that Latina and non-Latina women were not in leadership positions with social causes and began to assert themselves for more representation.

Each time a Latina advocated for cultural programming for the children, wrote an article in the local newspaper, made signs and marched for equal pay, all of these instances were steps toward their leadership development and empowerment. In every single circumstance, so many details of relationships that had to be built, difficult dialogues with persons who might not have been in favor of proposed changes and the actual event.

### **Finding Their Voices and Becoming Visible – Speaking Out and Empowerment**

Many women began to ask questions and through getting involved in community organizing, literally finding their voices, speaking up and expressing their opinions. Latinas reflected on how the privileges afforded to white people were different than to non-whites. Latinas learned that race

mattered and often found policy favored ‘normalized white privileges.’ They also came to see how racial and gender inequality were compounded outside of the Black-White binary in higher education, schools, churches or nonprofit organization settings.

### **Whiteness and other oppressions in difficult conversations**

Latinas encountered various situations where they found themselves at a crossroads of having to speak up for their self-interests. Going back to Antonia’s story, she was a Puerto Rican in high school who told me of several incidents in which she had to speak up and defend her values against her Mexican American male teacher at South Division High School. It is important to note that Antonia differentiated herself from the mainland Latin person, not only by nationality but also by gender. The following are some excerpts and different occasions where Antonia speaks up for her rights. The first is Antonia’s interaction with Mr. Lopez, a Latin American history teacher, before her presentation at Pius High School:

Antonia, please the only thing I am going to ask you not to say is ‘*Viva la Raza*.’ Of course, the first thing I said was, ‘*Viva la Raza*,’ because I was developing my own ideology and this is who I was (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

In the above statement, Mr. Lopez asked Antonia to conform to expectations of ‘being white’ and not to claim her ethnic identity; meaning, she had to erase and deny her identity when she was going to give a presentation at PIUS, a predominantly all-white Catholic High School in Milwaukee. Antonia knew his statement of telling to not say *Viva la Raza* was a subtle way of saying, please conform to being a ‘good girl’ and visitor to the all-white private school. Antonia did not care about his thoughts and she made a concerted effort to say, *Viva la Raza*, using her native language and disregarding her teacher’s authority. Antonia seized the opportunity to broadcast her identity in the all-white privileged high school when she spoke at the podium. Regarding another incident of Mr. Lopez’ indoctrination of his political beliefs was when he spoke against Che Guevara, Antonia shared:

I learned that Mr. Lopez' political beliefs were different than what we [other Latin activists] were ascribing to in the community. When he said, 'the best thing that happened to Latin America is when they killed Che Guevara.' He said that to my class, half the kids were not politicized, and I was raised to respect your teachers. I mentioned it to other community activists because he needed to be exposed. I felt guilty about it" (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

Mr. Lopez exhibited sentiments about Che Guevara being a disruptive revolutionary that gave Latinos a bad reputation when he stated, 'the best thing happening to him was his death' (Antonia, Interview, 2015). Antonia communicated that Mr. Lopez was reluctant to support political revolutions and seemed to have sentiments that these actions disrupted an orderly society. Given both comments above, Mr. Lopez found it easier to dismiss Latino identity by asking Antonia to refrain on being 'Brown and Proud.' The multiple axes of Antonia being an obedient student in the Latino culture, along with her new-found identity of being an empowered young Puerto Rican activist, placed her at a crossroads. Antonia, an American by right but a 'foreigner' because she came from the Puerto Rican island, had to negotiate all these multiple intersections in the moment. The ability for Antonia to wrestle with the many conflicting messages, shows how she was willing to stand up for her beliefs, hopefully to empower other young women to ask questions, and challenge authority based on individuals' principles and beliefs.

The prevalence of normalized 'whiteness' or 'white privilege' became more obvious to Latinas as they found a support system with other like-minded women of color who encountered oppressive actions, lack of conversations, and unequal programs or services in their community. The following two quotes from Eva and Tina both Latinas, Eva a U. S. born Latina and Tina, a South American immigrant how how they became more conscious of race relations:

Why didn't white women engage in conversation with us? (Eva, Interview, 2016).

Why are white people going to tell us what to do? (Tina, Interview, 2015).

Latinas shared how they tried to discuss important issues about translating information from English to Spanish and how the white women in charge ignored the question or request, rendering Latinas invisible. Tina's question shows how Latinas realized white privilege existed when they were ignored by white people who dictated the goals of the community, without input from Latinas in the community. This analysis of identifying the difficulty of how whiteness was present in everyday conversations, led to their understanding of systemic racism and discrimination in the schools, in nonprofits and municipal government. Latinas understood that for many of the persons in leadership positions, they had never been exposed to other non-European ethnic groups.

In the narrative below, Eva captures the struggles between African American, Latina, and white women at a campus in the University of Wisconsin system where gender was not a unifying factor instead; race, ethnicity and class played a more dominant role. In this case, the multi-ethnic and multi-racial coalition formed between the two African American women and one Latina because they faced condescending experiences when they engaged with some white women. Eva remembered:

When we mentioned our concerns to the white women, there was no dialogue. It was a frustrating meeting for us, we each walked away from the meeting, understanding no bridges could be built. We were not speaking the same language, white women were afraid to engage and it required a high level of commitment to tackle racism, just like with tackling class. How do you work together when you might see similar issues around sexism but you might see it from a different lens depending on white privilege or middle-class point of view? We thought we can do something about this and we created the *Women of Color News* publication (Eva, Interview, 2016).

Eva and her colleagues attempted to address issues of racism, sexism, and discrimination with white women, hoping they would be allies in their struggle, but quickly realized there was not the same level of interest. The action of engaging in dialogue or trying to discuss the issue even though it did not result in favorable results, was a gendered action. In some ways, the relationality for the Latina and two African American women led to a coalition because they realized it was not a



race-only, class-only, or gender-only: It was all the above. The three women experienced social inequality in that conversation, or the lack of conversation. This new coalition sparked and motivated the three women to create their own newspaper, the *Women of Color News*. The purpose was to hear from readers about their struggles, their triumphs, and organizing efforts, creating a safe space for other like-minded women. The publication circulated for two years and many women proved that community organizing did matter. Eva remembered working all day at their day jobs, meeting at night with all women of color—African Americans, Latinas, and Native Americans, writing, editing and sharing stories that were not part of mainstream Milwaukee or the nation.

Latinas learned that they had to participate, no matter how uncomfortable that was. Most women had to share their opinions, thoughts or advice to the mainstream community. As Latinas became more socially conscious of issues, they asked more questions at school board meetings and nonprofit board meetings (Claudia, Interview, 2016; Antonia, Interview, 2015; Raquel, Interview, 2015). When Latinas reflected on the beginning of their social consciousness, they often recalled how they learned about the clear distinctions and demarcations of normalized white relations in political, social, and economic venues.

### **White and Black visibility and Latina invisibility**

The extreme segregation in Milwaukee led to complex conversations about the sizes and locations of the Black and white populations between the north and south sides. Prior to and during the desegregation court case, Latin children and were counted as whites by the school district, causing a major issue of contention. The issue of race and ethnicity, specifically identifying Hispanic kids as Hispanic, Black kids as Black, and white kids was extremely important for purposes of desegregation efforts. The percentages mattered. Pablo, a Puerto Rican, recalled the difficulty of educating the mainstream community about Latinos being different than the Black or the White population. Pablo's recollection when he was in his early 30s was the following:

When the desegregation order happened in the federal courts, numerically Latinos were insignificant and non-threatening to whites. It was an issue of scale, back then we were only 4% to 5 % of the school population (Pablo, Interview, 2015).

Pablo recalled how the court decision about desegregation impacted the Latin community because they were rendered invisible and trivial because of the small number in the community compared to Blacks and whites. Eva supported this claim when she stated, “At the time our biggest struggle was getting the data because you were either white or Black; Latino/a was not broken out as a subgroup” (Eva, Interview, 2016). The question of race with Latinos completely erased their ethnic or cultural backgrounds and the Latin community resisted this labeling in the school system.

Many of the participants shared how when the Latin community began to increase, the white scrutinized the needs and concerns of their community because of the ambiguity related to race and ethnicity. Eva and Pablo used their voices to scrutinize the educational policies of the district, at the same time, negotiating and not wanting to retard the efforts of the Black community with desegregation. This is another example of how Latinos had to negotiate their ethnicity and the ambiguity of race, along with allies in the struggle. Marjorie, a prominent activist today remarked about growing up with her German father and Mexican mother, moving around the country as a child and embracing her identity and activism efforts when she attended the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Marjorie stated:

They did not know what to make of a Latina, there was such a culture and tradition of Black and white. If you were something ‘in between’, some people would perceive you as white, some as Black. I was defining myself and not letting others define me, which I think was part of the experience (Marjorie, Interview, 2016).

The sentiments of Marjorie were widespread among the Latina activists. Most of them came of age when the Latin population was increasing and they were the newest ethnic group to relocate to Milwaukee. Marjorie questions her identity, along with cultural traditions and expectations in the

Black and white community. She realized that she could be proud of being Latina and that the self-reflection on her identity and ethnicity were similar to findings in Frankenberg (1993).

These issues of race and ethnicity arose in my interviews when activists recalled how they had no representation in public office. There were few Latino employers, medical providers, teachers, policeman, fireman, or journalists. The Latina activists critiqued the lack of visibility, the lack of major celebrations in the Hispanic community, and lack of positive stories about Latino culture, identity and language (Daniela, Interview, 2015; Paulina, Interview, 2015). Not only did the indiscernibility of Latinos occur with professions but it also occurred with educational policies, school programs and community services (Raquel, Interview, 2015; Margarita, Interview, 2015). Some women recalled how some gains were made in changing policy on creating programs for gifted and talented Latin students at the Milwaukee Public School District, attributing much of their success to an ally within the senior administration at central office. Olga, a light-skinned Puerto Rican, was very knowledgeable about the problems. She knew the system, yet the system did not recognize her as a Latina (Daniela, Interview, 2015). According to Daniela, her friend Olga was an insider who knew the system and could go undetected as the 'other' which helped the Latin community.

Daniela, Marjorie, Margarita, Olga, and the other Latina activists used their developing leadership skills of expressing themselves and asking legitimate questions about access and opportunity. In doing this, the Latina activists had to navigate uncharted territory in different landscapes, advocating and building the Latin community. Once a person asked questions about equity or fairness, it frequently led to the beginning of organizing on a specific issue. The majority of women shared how they had no formal experience in community organizing, but they learned by doing it, and by living it.

### **“Around the clock and on the job training”**

The grassroots effort of community organizing campaigns required many Latinas to volunteer on activities in the evenings and on the weekends. The notion of working ‘around the clock’ meant they were always working. Eva, a young Mexican American woman in her 30s at the time of the activism she remembered, explained how her volunteer hours in the 1970s taught her skills in newspaper production:

Working for *La Guardia* newspaper, bilingual community newspaper, I spent Sunday nights typesetting. I did a lot of the grunt work. I also took some of the photographs because of my personal interest (Interview, 2016).

In the 1980s when we created the *Women of Color News* publication, we raised money for the publication, printed 500 each cycle, distributed and delivered all the publications ourselves. We would work all day and head over to someone’s house at night and work to cranking out proposals, drafting this or that, and on the weekends, we would work on articles on Saturday and Sunday nights. Those were the days. I don’t have that kind of energy anymore (Eva, Interview, 2016).

The work of creating a bilingual community newspaper required skills in soliciting articles, writing articles, securing advertisements and funding sources, typesetting, securing photographs, securing printing rights, printing, publication and dissemination. These specialized skills were necessary to build a community paper in Spanish and English, the purpose of increasing awareness and knowledge in the broader community. Eva’s experience of community organizing was perfected on the job through experience.

Eva’s passion and self-interest to work with the *La Guardia* newspaper or the publications shows her dedication of working from home, while raising children, gathering with the other writers on editing or writing. This gendered style of organizing incorporated a style of learning together, analysis of issues, building consensus and delegating responsibilities. These leadership skills were learned while doing “on the job.” Many women talked about the added responsibilities of raising

children or taking care of elderly parents. Often, they took a “work break” for household domestic chores, always thinking about tasks that could be done once the children were asleep.

Latinas who involved in community organizing efforts used theory of community building and became engaged in a variety of campaigns. In taking part of organizing, they quickly learned the messiness of the process, the multitudes of interactions with different people, many ethnicities, a variety of education levels but through it all they developed leadership skills. These leadership skills helped Latinas trust their instincts, speak out for themselves and their community. The act of speaking up is an act that takes tremendous courage and one that can be unfamiliar because of cultural traditions. They learned the behavior of finding their voices, negotiating their anxieties of speaking up, working on issue campaigns at all hours of the day, knowing that if they did not do this work, it would not get done.

The complex landscape of racial, ethnic and gender identity made Latinas face a range of emotions from anxieties and disappointments to empowerment and success. In many ways, getting involved in community organizing was a messy experience, they learned by doing (Childers, Rhee, & Daza, 2013). The framework of “belonging and the politics of belonging” described by Yuval-Davis describes how the social location, identity and emotional attachment, and similar ethical or political values are key to community engagement (2006). In all of the interviews, all of the men and women shared an emotional connection to the place and people, they were committed to making a change, empowering themselves. Latina activists found their voices, speaking up for themselves and the community, realizing that they had to address difficult conversations around the invisibility of Latinas in conversation, public spaces and because of the prominent Black-White paradigm. As Latinas worked in an apprentice-like setting, the actions of organizing gave them a sense of who they are and the contributions that could be made.

## **Making a Difference in Milwaukee - Issues Near and Dear to Women**

Latina community organizing mattered especially on issues that dealt with their children, themselves or other loved ones in the family. In my interviews, as Latinas activists recalled their community organizing days, and after reflecting on my interview questions did they realize that most of the issues impacted women and children. Jacqueline stated, “Now talking, I am realizing that we only worked with women and children” (Jacqueline, Interview, 2015). Most women I interviewed worked on education issues, taskforces for battered women, health services, and recreational programs. In this section I describe several of the projects they worked on that have had lasting impacts.

### **Advocating for educational reform**

The efforts of creating an alternative school in the Latino community occurred for many reasons, but mainly because the Latin community lost faith in Milwaukee Public Schools. Many women shared how important educational equity was for them. The need for bilingual education programs was tremendous. Claudia remembered facing the institutional discrimination that occurred in the classroom, and sympathizing with young people about going to school in an unsupportive system. She described how students were harassed when they did attend school, or they were not held accountable for missing school. Claudia shared:

Many of the kids spoke and read Spanish and they were having a difficulty with English. Many of the kids had no education, they came from migrant families, their parents had minimal education, they did not go to school on the farms. Sometimes the parents allowed the children to stay home if they did not want to go to attend school. We knew the mothers wanted something different for their kids. They did not want the children working on the farm at all hours of the day, picking up cotton or tomatoes, the mothers wanted them to be educated, they wanted them to become doctors, lawyers or teachers (Claudia, Interview, 2016).

Claudia describes a challenging situation facing migrant farmworker children in the early and mid-1970s, who were living in inadequate and substandard housing conditions, often with no plumbing and lack of school opportunities. The parents themselves had little education and did not understand the public schooling system in the United States. This explains why when a student stated they wanted to stay home, parents would let them, not fully understanding the implications from the classroom. Yet they wanted their children to have a better life than their own. Claudia not only advocated for bilingual education reform in the classroom but had to educate the parents on expectations for parents with school-aged children. Similarly, in the Native American community three Oneida mothers who were frustrated with Milwaukee Public Schools “started holding classes for ten Indian children in the living room of one of the mothers, combining academics with pride in their own Indian cultures” (Krouse, 2003). This similar experience occurred when Latinos and women joined forces with male organizers to create an alternative high school named *Centro Cultural Educativo-Chicano Boricua* (CCE-CB).

In 1973, the *La Guardia* newspaper reported, “Most of the teachers worked on a voluntary basis. The Latin community recognizes the importance of education and the failure of the public schools. CCE-CB would like to educate students to participate in the society, but at the same time would not want them to forget their cultural traditions. We need to education men and women for different professions, however not at the price of negating our culture.” (*Centro Cultural Educativo-Chicano Boricua*, 1973). Jacqueline, Raquel and Nicole said:

We worked at the four alternative schools, one of them being on CCE-BC on the south side. MPS was not meeting the needs of hard to reach youth, Black and Brown kids were dropping out all over the city. It was about getting students to gain their high school diploma, many people called them dropouts, we called them pushouts (Jacqueline, Interview, 2015).

I knew firsthand how Latino kids were taught in the coat room, there was no space for them in the traditional classroom, all their desks were underneath the coat racks with two to three different age groups (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

There was so much overcrowding in the south side schools. In some cases, the Latino kids were put in trailers on the playgrounds. Latinos were totally segregated. This was the way things were done, kids had separate play times—it was awful (Nicole, Interview, 2015).

Most women were concerned about not just their own children, but all the other kids in the community. The concern for all children regardless of race and ethnicity showed these women activists were more inclusive. Most of them were mothers, with kids of their own, or because they lived in both worlds of being Latina; speaking English and Spanish, they were compelled to education reform efforts, to help children get out of poverty. Mary Anne McNulty was similarly passionate about helping children and parents who were marginalized in the classroom, in the school, or by the administrators at central office. Mary Anne understood these parents, low-income individuals, and with limited education, did not know how to work with teachers or administrators. Latinas identified the need to create programs for young people outside of the school setting.

Latinas learned about the insurmountable problems within the Milwaukee Public School system when she talked with parents and children in the neighborhood. She heard stories about low achievement rates, exclusionary policies, and school personnel who could not communicate with the children or the parents of Spanish Speaking descent. It was a common policy of the schools to give a medical exclusion to youth that were labeled “hyperactive.” Exclusion meant that a child was found unfit for the public-school systems programs and not allowed to attend school. For any parent to be told that your child is not worthy of being educated because of behavioral issues is upsetting, but when a family does not have the resources within their own family structure, or have any connections in the school system, then they are at a loss. Latinas empathized with the family, that they were being treated “as less than” and receiving no services. This was completely unacceptable to Latinas and they were committed toward making a difference.



Mary Anne encountered parents who had difficulty finding someone within the MPS district office who could explain options for children with cognitive and physical impairments. Not only were low income communities facing discrimination because of cognitive abilities, but it also occurred when a young teenage girl became pregnant or a young man got in trouble with the law. Milwaukee Public Schools did not have policies in place to accommodate or work with youth with difficult backgrounds or situations. According to Raquel, “Mary Anne would figure out who had the power to make decisions, schedule meetings, ask to meet with representatives and try to ask for reasonable solutions” (Raquel, Interview, 2015). In some of those meetings, Mary Anne heard comments such as, “You people...,” and subsequent blaming of the individual for specific circumstances, and the representatives in schools did not realize or appreciate the depth of the social problems. Mary Anne stood up for herself, and she and the community residents and did not back down, stating, “Don’t ‘you people’ us.” According to Mary Anne’s log, she understood the dynamics of people having privileged positions in government, nonprofit organizations, and schools and how the oppressed had little access to their power structures in local neighborhoods (McNulty, Educational Analysis [personal writing], n.d). The level of work in creating the *Centro Cultural Educativo – Chicano Boricua* (CCE-CB) school is evident with Mary Anne’s notes:

We met with staff and volunteers for CCE-CB to discuss the board of directors, student and parent handbook, curriculum for each grade, discipline procedures, credit attainment, special projects, teacher and counselor recruitment, and salaries for teachers. All this work took place on Sunday, September 10, 1972 from 2:00 to 8:00 p.m. The next day we made phone calls for financial assistance for CCE-CB (McNulty, My Log, n.d.).

All the above descriptions showcase how Latina community organizing did matter, how Latina and non-Latina activists wanted to make sure that every child in the neighborhood was given the opportunity to succeed. The next section highlights the beginnings of work of marginalized youth who needed alternative homes or temporary shelters.

## **The Founding of Walker's Point Youth and Family Center**

In 1976, a four-bed runaway shelter, located on Milwaukee's south side, was created to serve youth who were homeless (McNulty, Throughout my life, n.d.; Raquel, Interview, 2015). Raquel shared how she worked with Mary Anne and stated:

Because of Mary Anne's initiatives, the Walker's Point Youth and Family Center (WPYFC) was started, she was in a leadership position before and after the organization was created. WPYFC served runaway children, kids with mental health issues, or those who were living on the streets (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

Antonia corroborated these sentiments, "Mary Anne understood there was a gap of services and nothing for them existed at the time" (Antonia, Interview, 2015). These stories show how Raquel and Antonia, both in their mid-20s had been organizing for nearly 7 years and saw that Mary Anne's community organizing strategies worked and were worth learning.

For the past 40 years the Walker's Point Youth and Family Center (WPYFC) has continuously been serving youth and families. The services are free and offer youth a 24-hour hotline for counseling in teen crisis situations and provide shelter for homeless youth ages 16-21 years old, helping them with to learn self-sufficiency and preparing them to live independently. Raquel credits her leadership development at WPYFC in the mid-1970s as a jumpstart to her organizing and sustaining the Felix Mantilla Little League in the 1980s and 1990s.

## **Sustaining the Felix Mantilla Little League**

Felix Mantilla, one of the first Latino major league baseball players, played in the 1957 Milwaukee Braves World Series championship. He had a vision to start a little league for children in Milwaukee (D'Amato, 2016). Felix started the league in the early 1970s, when very few specialized services existed for children who were not a part of white Milwaukee. The organization and maintenance of this little league was sponsored by the United Community Center for years and the Athletics Director recruited volunteers to help with officiating, selling refreshments, purchasing

baseball equipment, securing scoreboards, printing game schedules, organizing parent volunteers, and encouraging children as they played baseball.

Raquel, along with her husband the Athletic Director, were an integral part of sustaining the Felix Mantilla Little League from the 1980s to the 1990s. She felt that creating recreational opportunities for young boys and girls was extremely important. Raquel recalled, “When my kids were growing up, I focused on the Felix Mantilla Little League, I was on the board for fifteen years, we grew the league, we worked four nights per week and every Saturday” (Raquel, Interview, 2015). Raquel found the time and energy working with her husband and other volunteers to run and sustain the operation of the league after the initial groundbreaking ceremony in 1972 (Glauber, 2017).

Had it not been for the consistent effort of Raquel for over fifteen years working alongside with her spouse and other volunteers, the Felix Mantilla Little League might not be in existence. Hundreds of children in Milwaukee’s south side community gained the experience of being part of a baseball league where they helped youth (both boys and girls) learn valuable lessons about values of team work, being disciplined to attend practice, supporting other players on the team, and setting goals for the game. The applied skills of athlete and student taught the children life lessons on the field and in the classroom. The Felix Mantilla Little League, was one of a few little leagues in Milwaukee’s central city, ensuring that low income children had access to recreational programs (Galván & Siegrist, 2015). Raquel referred to her self-interest about the little league when she stated, “You have to do things that you want to do” (Raquel, Interview, 2015). Another league in Milwaukee’s central city focused on getting African American kids to play on the Beckum-Stapleton Little League (Owczarski, 2014).

In December of 2017, the Milwaukee County Parks Department announced a \$ 2.8 million private investment that will allow for new baseball diamonds and a new pavilion for the Felix

Mantilla Little League (Behm, 2017). This significant action by the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors and County Executive Chris Abele approved private investment for a public park, with an understanding that Journey House (local non-profit) would maintain the new facilities. Important discussions emanated from this policy change about access to public parks and the privatization of parks.

Again, Raquel's long serving commitment of buying supplies for the concession stand, recruiting children and parents to volunteer and fundraising allowed the Felix Mantilla Little League to be a shining example of parent involvement. Raquel's volunteerism on sustaining the little league shows her understanding of creating neighborhoods where parents, children, and residents can use their time and talent to create a sense of community in the city. The investment into the lives of children would mean abundant growth for them in their futures. The sustainability of the Felix Mantilla Little League in Baran Park is a demonstration of how investment in children's programming can benefit the long-term growth of the community.

### **The creation of gifted and talented program for bilingual children**

When Daniela's son was eight years old, the teachers at his school complained to her about his disruptive behavior in the classroom. Daniela suspected that her son might be bored in the classroom. Daniela attempted to have her son attend the Gifted and Talented Program at Golda Meir School, and requested to have a psychological evaluation to measure his Intelligence Quotient (IQ) because she suspected her son to have exceptional talent. Daniela remembered:

The school's enrollment at the time only included white and some Black children. I asked, 'why isn't there programs for Latinos?' We encountered racism. I did not speak English too well. I organized friends, Senator Jim Moody, and received media attention on the issue" (Daniela, Interview, 2015).

Daniela, an immigrant from Central America mentions that she encountered racism when asked to have her son enroll in Golda Meir. She was right when they told her that the specialized

services did not meet the needs of Latino children, for the school policy only impacted white and Black children (Daniela, Interview, 2015), like many other Latina activists encountered the historic Black-White paradigm that dominated Milwaukee. Daniela proved that even if her English was not perfect, she could act, she could fight for the rights of her child, her son's classmates, and for future children.

Milwaukee Public Schools prides itself on continuing the Gifted and Talented program at Allen Field Elementary School on the south side of Milwaukee. The Milwaukee Public School District over the years has expanded educational programs, where they determine the needs of each student, determining where exceptional talent can be identified in the following areas: Academic, artistic, creativity, leadership, and intelligence (Milwaukee Public Schools - Gifted and Talented program, 2017). The specialization of schools has resulted in the formation of other schools with Milwaukee Public Schools that focus on the arts, trades, transportation, and languages. Daniela's leadership about developing a program for Latino gifted and talented children not only provides quality education programming but has provided an educational facility in the heart of Milwaukee's Latino community. Many families chose their housing based on the neighborhood amenities and access to quality schools is at the top of the list.

### **The Establishment of the Latina Task Force**

According to an article in the *Women of Color News*, activists in the early 1980s recognized the need to create a Latina Task Force (LTF). This group would address the needs of Hispanic women. Although many reports talked about the needs of women or Hispanics, "nothing has been done related specifically for the Hispanic woman" (Latina Task Force, 1983). The task force sent out questionnaires to interested Hispanic women and three priorities evolved from this process: Employment, education, and health.

In a voluntary capacity (outside of work hours, time away from their families), these women, within a task force structure, will document and substantiate the needs of Hispanic women. “The women in each committee bring with them a history of extensive involvement in their respective professions.” (Eva, Interview, 2016).

Latinas created a forum for women to develop organizational and leadership skills, along with resources for educational purposes. Georgia Pabst, a reporter of *The Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* reported:

In 2006, some of the founding members of the task force decided to work with the Women’s Fund to create a permanent community resource for Latinas. *Latinas en Acción* (Latinas in Action), previously known as the Latina Task Force, a statewide group that helps women of Latina heritage develop leadership and organizational skills, along with offering educational support (2009).

*Latinas en Acción* is part of a larger network of underrepresented philanthropic groups including: The African American Women’s Fund Project, Lesbian Fund, and Viv Nau’s: A Hmong Women’s Giving Circle.

The early steps of reaching Latinas through the *Women of Color News* publication shows the impact of early community organizing efforts in the media, and long-lasting policy and practice implications. Although this publication is no longer in circulation, many women who created the LTF knew there was, and continues to be, a need for empowerment and being part of change.

### **Foreshadowing the MATA community media project: Minds and Hearts Unlimited**

In the early 1970s, Jacqueline used her creative and artistic talents to create the Minds and Hearts Unlimited Arts studio, where she worked with young parents and their children. Jacqueline said, “It was because of SWEAT Associates and Mary Anne that I created my organization” (Jacqueline, Interview, 2015). While she worked in the arts, she was invited to join efforts with creating and promoting video projects for the Input Community Video project.

At the time, cable television did not exist in urban areas, and a group of men and female activists on the south side were fighting for cable television access. Jacqueline and Nicole shared how Latinas and non-Latinas joined forces to record important events that were occurring in the community. They travelled to different organizations, attended meetings with a reel-to-reel camera; they both mentioned how it was “guerrilla” style. The group organized and advocated for five community access stations in all areas of the city; downtown, eastside, west side, north side and south side. Jacqueline described:

We put cameras in peoples’ face, recording them and trying to keep them honest. We knew people have to be involved, people have to have knowledge, people have to have power to speak with people with power. We did not improve life by giving people jobs but by giving people a voice, we documented every event that happened in the community. It was very segregated but we worked with everyone, when it came to videotaping It was all run by women. Why did we do the taping? Because we had to inform the community, we went to health centers, schools, taskforce meetings for battered women (a safe place for women and children). Now that I am talking with you, I am realizing that we only worked with women and children (Jacqueline, Interview, 2015).

Jacqueline and her colleagues were ahead of their time, they were using audio and video recordings as a new medium for teaching and training. Not only were these recording used in educational settings but they held persons accountable for their decisions and actions. The big difference from the early 1970s and 2010s is the size of the recording device. In the interviews with Jacqueline and Nicole, both women mentioned how heavy the cameras were to hold and the complication of having enough reels. Today, the size of a smartphone is smaller than one reel used for taping.

Another activist, Nicole recalled:

We had library tapes where people could watch at library, no one had personal machines. A lot of stuff for kids, we continued to do videotaping piece, going into community, we helped the community record whatever they wanted to record. The videotapes were another learning tool for the community. It was to create public relations, some groups made videos about their organization, they marketed

themselves. Back then the nonprofit community was very small compared to today (Nicole, Interview, 2015).

Nicole's description of how she engaged with community members is significant and relevant to working with neighborhood groups. Nicole asked individuals what they wanted to record, note they did not go into the community and tell them what to record. Nicole flipped the conversation and power dynamics, a welcoming and unusual experience of the time. In any type of community engagement activities, this is known as a best practice and the exact way to build trust and relationships in the community.

Both women, Jacqueline and Nicole, were extremely involved and believed in the power of communication. Jacqueline smiled and said, "I am MATA's grandma" (Jacqueline, Interview, 2015). She was referring to the current MATA Community Media Project, Milwaukee's Public Access TV and Community Cable Stations on Time Warner Community in Milwaukee. The mission of this program is to provide access, without prejudice, to multimedia technology for the purposes of education and information to Milwaukee and surrounding communities (Milwaukee Community Media, 2017). This creation of public access television showcasing newsworthy events in diverse communities, happened because men, women, and children shared their stories, hoping that others could learn from each other.

### **Desegregating the University Club**

In my interview with Vicki, she recalled the irony of working for years in her 20s during the 1970s on a multitude of organizing campaigns from the farmworker movement, fair elections, healthcare and educational reform hoping that the media outlets would build awareness and how one instinctive moment could get you more press coverage ever imagined. In September 1983, Vicki, a white staff assistant accompanied Governor Tony Earl to a luncheon meeting with labor representatives at the private University Club (UC) overlooking Lake Michigan in downtown



Milwaukee. Vicky, a young woman in her 30s was responsible for the seamless conversations between Governor Tony Earl and labor representatives. As Vicky approached these representatives she was treated in hostile manner by UC staff because she unbeknownst violated antiquated and discriminatory policies of banning women from the dining rooms at the UC. After back and forth conversations between Vicki and UC staff, Vicki recalled being so angry and stated:

The male UC staff said, “you don’t understand, women are not allowed here, so get out.” I sat down on a stool and I thought I am representing the Governor, I wanted to kick him in his balls and walk in. When the UC staff turned his back, I walked into the room, he grabbed me, I elbowed him and kept going to say hello. I said, hello to my friends and left. This would never have happened to a man, we were second class citizens, a lot of things happened at lunch meetings or golf courses. Women were not allowed (Vicky, Interview, 2015).

The result of this interaction were reporters happened to be in the event and later reported on the issue. Vicky shared this information with Governor Earl and they both agreed to call back the UC stating that the Governor and his staff could not patronize a place that discriminates against race, class, gender and until the policy is changed, the Governor would not return to the UC and cancelled all future meetings. Governor Earl’s leadership and support to his female staff changed policy and allowed women in the dining room. The *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported how UC members unanimously approved the change the longstanding tradition of prohibiting women in the dining room (Bednarek, 1983). At the end of the interview, Vicky stated:

My five-minute claim to fame was desegregating the University Club and all other clubs fell in line. If you’re a man than you have credibility, but back then as a woman you have to prove yourself (Vicky, Interview, 2015).

Vicky’s experience at the University Club demonstrates how women were treated and how some men were following policy and had to abide by the laws of the employer. It is interesting to note that both individuals a woman and a person in the service industry were pitted against each other, yet in reality it was the policy of a private, privileged white-male club that ultimately had to respond to the power of the Governor’s office.

## **The making of New Opportunities for Homeownership in Milwaukee (NOHIM)**

In 2003, a program designed to improve central-city mortgage lending, disbanded after 12 years of operation, originating over \$260 million with 4,653 loans in the greater Milwaukee area (Morics, 2005). According to Eva, there is no record of women's history with the NOHIM project. From its inception, Eva and a female colleague worked at local community development corporation (CDC,) where they worked tirelessly to figure out how CDC's could help meet the needs of lenders and future homeowners. In a special report by the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* titled "CLOSING a CHAPTER on the METRO HOUSING SAGA", Professor Squires said, "The housing market here continues to be rigidly segregated. There's been a lot of symbolic progress and some substantive progress over the years, but we're a long way from our goal" (Derus, 2000). Eva explained how NOHIM worked:

The nonprofits were packaging the deals, we [Eva and a colleague] thought, 'why shouldn't the CDC's get some money for packaging the deals', so for every good deal that gets packaged, a family gets a house, the nonprofit gets some money. All the CDC's in town, from ESHAC on the east side, to West Side CDC and Walker's Point CDC on the near south side could all take advantage and bring in operational dollars, helping sustain the organization by getting \$250.00 per deal. The family had to pass their own tests. When it did work, we didn't need the credit, I didn't need the credit. There is no history of it and I think this speaks to women's history, we don't recognize our self and the work we did. It was just about doing the work, I always wanted to go back and tell that story to her daughter (Eva, Interview, 2016).

Eva and her colleague created a new way of financially supporting CDC's in the City of Milwaukee. These women designed a policy that met the needs of working families throughout Milwaukee, these women did not only think about the south side, they thought of a comprehensive plan that could impact every neighborhood throughout Milwaukee.

In the Annual Review of Lending Practices of Financial Institutions by the City of Milwaukee, is the official notification of the disbanding of NOHIM. The impact of NOHIM over the course of 12 years is demonstrated by the hundreds of first-time homeowners who gained access

to lending opportunities working with over fifty financial institutions who approved the mortgages. The initial idea of NOHIM was created by one Latina and another non-Latina, but nowhere in the history of the legislation, reports, or research are they recognized, but the impact was tremendous. Low to moderate income families were finally able to accumulate wealth. Even in the final report, credit is given to Mayor John O. Norquist for organizing the program and a report by the Journal Sentinel, further credits “NOHIM, a lenders coalition representing most major bank and savings and loans for prodding 1990s increased investment in minority and modest-income markets (Derus, 2000).

The creation of the NOHIM, a program designed by women working in the field of community development, established partnerships with financial institutions to support increasing homeownership rates in American and Latino neighborhoods. The NOHIM program allowed community and lending institutions to provide technical assistance with workshops on financial literacy training, preapproval programs, and improving credit scores, allowing for hundreds of homeowners to buy their first homes. The purchase of a home allowed families to establish roots in neighborhoods and families were no longer vulnerable to absentee landlords who were not in compliance with basic housing standards. Eva’s leadership on NOHIM shows how well-versed she was in understanding the tapestry of cities and how community organizing led to community development.

### **Taking a stand against domestic violence**

The subject of domestic violence can be “taboo” subject within the Latino culture. For women to speak against her partner/spouse would not only dishonor an esteemed member of the family, but would also have social, political and economic consequences (Perilla, 1994). For Latina and non-Latina women, the act of reporting to authorities about the violence they experienced in their home by abusive partners or husbands was an incredible risk. Keep in mind that many Latinas

relocated to Milwaukee because their partner secured a job and housing, eventually recruiting many women to Milwaukee. This point is underscored in Cecilia Menjívar's work on examining social class, aspirations, and the meaning of work. Menjívar found that most Central American women entered the work force to supplement their husband's income (1999).

In addition, the woman was the primary caregiver to the children and possibly other family members. As the primary caregiver, some women had little opportunity to secure work outside the home and did not have any training to pursue good-paying jobs. Menjívar and Salcido explain how some immigrant women do not have networks of family members, friends and do not understand the services provided in the nonprofit sector and feel isolated with a sense of powerlessness (2002). In my research, Latinas learned that when they went to speak to some of the religious men, they faced monumental challenges when addressing the issues of abusive relationships in homes. After some time, Paulina earned the trust of some of these women, and she had conversations with the priests about the violence and suffering that occurred with their partners. According to Paulina, a devoted Mexican American Catholic remembered:

I kept hearing how the priests would tell many women '*esta es la cruz que tiene que soportar-aguantate*' (this is the cross you have to bear—you have to deal with the pain). This infuriated me because priests are the last person an abused woman should go to, he is not married, and he does not know the dynamics of domestic relationships. This is one of the first things that I spoke about in a public meeting. This man should be respecting you, not beating and disrespecting you. I got involved because it had to change for the young children (Paulina, Interview, 2015).

Paulina became very animated when she described the interactions of docile Latina women who did not know how to handle the reactions of some male clergy. Many of these women came to Paulina seeking her advice, knowing they could not accept the decision of the church but also knowing they could not tolerate their experiences of domestic abuse at home. Paulina understood the traditions of the church and the sanctity of marriage, but as she saw is, as a woman, a mother, a sister, she could not tolerate putting women's lives at stake. It was not only about women: Children who witness

violence and think this type of behavior is normal and accepted. In this case, Paulina's gender, ethnicity, and religion were intersecting and she stood up, challenging the religious men; fighting for women who were in abusive relationships. Paulina refused to accept that women should '*aguantate*' (endure pain) and believed that the broader community had to speak up to change the behavior.

Not only did many Latina women face mental and physical abuse in their homes, but also faced discrimination and indifference by the policies of the City of Milwaukee and State of Wisconsin. This was a time when no safeguards were in place to protect women from their offenders, no crisis housing or programs to help the victims work, or programs nor services to help women and children develop survival skills from their experiences. Fifty years ago, when women were sexually assaulted in their homes or in the streets, women faced demoralizing circumstances, sometimes not taken seriously by male public officials facing substantial threats by their male counterparts. Isabel, a policewoman, recalled how she was routinely called to report on sexual assault cases because it dealt with women. In one case, a young man who sexually assaulted a young girl, was arrested but police officers knew his court case was in a couple of weeks and since, 'this is a minor case', let him out on bail. Within the two weeks, he had a car accident (a minor fender/bender), then raped and killed the girl. Isabel recalled,

I was so happy when the parents of that young girl fought for legislation that mandates if a person is charged with sexual assault or rape, you have to hold them until the court date, you don't let them out (Isabel, Interview, 2015).

Isabel recalled how the city and the state had no policies in place when a woman was sexually assaulted. She remembered how the parents founded the state chapter of "Parents of Murdered Children" and got a state "constitutional amendment that allows a judge to hold a defendant without bail in certain felony matters (Rabideau Silvers, 2010).

The issues of violence against women led to increased advocacy efforts by many groups in Milwaukee, from the local chapter of Nine to Five, to public officials in the City of Milwaukee, or

the County Board of Supervisors advocating for increased resources to address sexual assault, prevention of domestic violence, or increased funding for women shelters and displaced homemakers. Regarding accompanying a woman to the District Attorney's office, Daniela shared:

I get chills remembering the times going to the DA's office, the husband would be there with his friends, the wife alone and shaking. Some women knew that if they saw husband/boyfriend on the street, they would kill or hurt them even more. Many women at the time did not press charges because there were no laws at the time. Our group, Mothers Against Rape fought for legislation. We sat at Chief Brier's office, took over his office, to make sure that police officers had training to deal with domestic violence issues. We proposed this over thirty-three years ago. We went to Madison and shared the message that domestic violence was a crime. Today police officers get the training (Daniela, Interview, 2015).

Daniela experienced humiliation and intimidation by the Milwaukee Police Department when they questioned her credentials based on her gender. Daniela recalled, "When I called the Milwaukee Police Department to report physical abuse, they would ask me, 'What did you do to him?' (Daniela, Interview, 2015). Not only did Daniela face the physical abuse of her spouse but she was antagonized because of her gender by the local state authority. At the same time, from an intersectional lens, Daniela knew that the United States was built on the ideals of protection, differing from the despotic government of her homeland. This difference encouraged her to work with other women to create the "Mothers Against Rape" and "Domestic Violence Prevention Task Force" in the City of Milwaukee (Daniela, Interview, 2015).

The efforts to create policies for law enforcement to recognize the violations of abusive relationships have saved hundreds of lives since the 1970s. Unfortunately, this problem persists, but institutions such as "Sojourner Truth House" and "UMOS Latina Resource Center" both serve as places where women and children can find support as they leave domestic violent situations. Many of these new organizations that meet the need for low-income women only started because of women getting involved and fighting for safer communities. Women – Latinas, Blacks, and whites- built networks and alliances, participating in meeting at the Sixteenth Street Community Health

Center, the Spanish Center, Nine to Five, and the Task Force on Battered Women (McNulty, M. A., 1990; Daniela, 2015; Isabel, 2015). These joint efforts pressured public officials for public policies to protect women and children.

## **Conclusion**

Does community organizing matter? The answering is a resounding “yes,” and Latinas, along with allies, despite working in male-centric environments, determined how to work in mainstream communities. All the Latinas interviewed recognized that they had to get involved and take action, they figured how to manage and negotiate all the demands of raising children, caring for the “*viejitos* (elderly grandparents).” Some Latinas chose to only raise their families, provide all of the necessary caregiving in families but these Latina activists differentiated themselves by organizing and taking action for the working class.

In this chapter, I have told the stories of the activist women I interviewed. Their stories show, first, the obstacles women, especially Latinas, faced in entering male-dominated urban institutions in the 1970s in Milwaukee. Second, Latinas' stories tell us how they adopted community organizing strategies to address such obstacles, along the way learning from Latino activists, developing leadership skills, and finding their voices. The latter involved confronting not only sexism, but also whiteness and Latina invisibility in urban institutions, and donating their labor by volunteering for Latina causes. Last, I show how Latina community organizing, especially on issues such as educational reform, programs for youth and women, housing, and domestic violence, made a difference in Milwaukee by contributing to policy changes that benefited not only Latinas but low-income people throughout Milwaukee. The “learning by doing” was a mantra of taking action, not sitting back and let others determine what would or not be done.

Conducting interviews with Latinas and non-Latinas, I appreciated the collective efforts in the areas of educational reform, youth-minded activities, empowerment programs, cable television

programming access, homeownership opportunities domestic violence prevention. Each one of these issue campaigns organized by Latinas, some who had recent histories in Milwaukee or the United States fought to uphold principles or standards of behavior in the community. Community organizing matters, and the narratives of these women shows how having role models, qualities of an organizer, can impact the day-to-day lives of women and children. Countless organizing campaigns protecting individuals to be discriminated on grounds such as their race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability or age have been a fundamental principal of everyone living a fair and respectful life.

Over fifty years later, Latinos and non-Latinos are continuing to organize on various persistent issues. One organization at the forefront of Latin activism in Milwaukee is *Voces de La Frontera*. This group champions immigrant rights and reform, voter turnout, and the rights of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) youth. In the last decade, *Voces de la Frontera* has trained and supported young people in the launch of Youth Empowered in the Struggle (YES). YES, is now found in 12 high schools and 3 universities with multiple other local chapters. Many of the students in YES, organize, lead, and strategize for upcoming campaigns. The executive director of *Voces* is a nationally recognized Latina woman. Latinas can be seen in countless community organizing roles, from executive directors, to lead organizers, and student interns.

My research about Latinas in Milwaukee builds on the scholarship of community organizing efforts throughout the United States. The medium sized nature of Milwaukee and the racialized pattern of development led in many ways to a close-knit and defined ethnic area for Latinos on the near south side of Milwaukee, south of downtown Milwaukee. This strong sense of community and belonging allowed individuals to merge and join collective efforts and improving the community. The next chapter supports this last statement and focuses on how Latina activists used the metaphor



of “family” or “*familismo*” to create a sense of belonging and cohesion. “*La extension familiar*” or extension of family is how I describe Latinas activism in Milwaukee.

## Chapter 7

### Activism With “*Familismo*”

Your family must be the priority if you are Hispanic,  
that is whatever you call your family; you do not  
have to be married or have children.

Figure 7.1 Quote from Aurora Weier, Community Enrichment Center (CEC) founder, (Malpartida, 1984).

In Figure 7.1, Aurora Weier<sup>18</sup>, a native of Panama, founder and director of the Community Enrichment Center confirms the idea that the metaphor of family can be extended to the community. The Community Enrichment Center opened in 1984, located at the site of the former Natatorium on the corner of Richard and Center Streets in Milwaukee’s Riverwest neighborhood which had a large Puerto Rican community. As a political refugee from Panama, Aurora set out to help “at-risk” youth. Raquel, a Puerto Rican, remembered Aurora’s commitment and how she considered the children and parents in Milwaukee as part of her family. Many of the participants I interviewed remembered Aurora Weier as one of the Latinas who worked for Milwaukee’s children. Raquel recalled:

Aurora believed that any woman could advocate for her family, whether it was organizing around the home or school. Aurora and I organized the first retreat for 10-15 women on the weekend. We believed that you could make a difference, no matter how small or large the issue (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

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<sup>18</sup> Aurora Weier, a native of Panama, opened the Community Enrichment Center (CEC) in 1984 to operate educational and cultural programs. Unfortunately, in 1985 she was murdered on the steps of CEC by a jealous male community leader (Man convicted of killing a rival community activist finally confesses, *The Journal Times*, 2001).

In my interview with Claudia, a woman who identified with both her Puerto Rican father and Mexican mother, remembered how Aurora's mission was to organize women, raise money for after-school programs so that children would not join gangs (2015). For some young men in urban areas, these men choose to join a network of underclass individuals creating a brotherhood, supporting each other as they build skills in organized crime (Hagedorn, 1988). Claudia recalled how Aurora would donate any money she earned to Latin families and how she worked with parents, helping them understand that their children could have the same education as white children (Claudia, Interview, 2015). Aurora was no different than other immigrants, newcomers, who wanted to build a community and worked towards the creation of a community-based organization that would meet the needs of families (Sánchez Korrol, 1994). In 1984, a news article in the *Women of Color News* (Malpartida), Aurora asked herself:

‘Am I going to save the whole world and condemn my family?’ I came to realize that I have to keep my family unit strong for me to be able to be strong in my job. If you do not reach a balance in this on-going conflict, your spirit will be weak and you will not be effective in politics or community work (Weier, 1984).

Aurora's reflection shows that the balance of her family and her community [extended family] was of extreme importance for her family and career. One way Aurora balanced her community life was surrounding herself, with women like Raquel and Claudia to name a few. This support network with people who shared the same values and cultural understandings was important to Aurora as she made Milwaukee her new home. Personally, I can attest to this experience of a supportive network with people with similar cultural backgrounds or migration stories and how these communities help families navigate the customs and traditions of the U.S. My parents immigrated to the U.S. from Bogotá, Colombia, in 1963 and they found other Colombians and established a support network. To this day, these childhood friends are considered an extension of my family even though we have no biological connections.

The creation of Milwaukee's Hispanic community has been similar to other *colonias* (colonies) across the United States, where Latinos established close-knit communities where they built social networks, opened restaurants, and nightclubs, and offered Spanish-language services or programs. Latin Americans [regardless from Central or South America] hoped to create a sense of community in Milwaukee. A common occurrence was to invite non-family members of Spanish-speaking descent to join family celebrations, or special holidays knowing the isolation and depression of being away from their family and friends. Often these relationships resulted in friends becoming 'quasi-family members.' The cultural concepts of support, or community awareness, to improve the well-being of others is '*familismo* (*familiness*) in practice' (Andrés-Hyman, Ortiz, Añez & Davidson, 2006). The socialization of Latinos in the United States not only includes family-blood relatives, but also extended family members in the community, individuals who share their culture, and strong family solidarity, which in turn helps with identity development (Zayas & Solari, 1994; García Bedolla, 2005). In this chapter, I will share how community organizing took the concept of *familismo* and created what I call '*la extension familiar*' (extended family). If activists formed and strengthened their identity alongside other friends and allies in the community who defended the same values and principals about equality and justice, then they were part of the extended family of activism.

First, all of the people I interviewed shared how some individuals in the community became 'quasi-family members': These individuals took on the roles and responsibilities of a typical family member and were called "*madrinas, padrinos, hermanas and hermanos.*" In Spanish, the term *madrina* means mother-like, the term *padrino* means father-like, the term *hermana* means sister and the term *hermano* means brother. Throughout this chapter I will refer to these terms to show how community organizers used these terms to explain their quasi family-like relationships in the community and thus my use of the term '*la extension familiar.*' This term builds on the notion of '*familismo*', how the emotional work of community organizing was noted by my interview participants. Like blood-

related families, these quasi-families experienced special bonds, disagreements, favoritism and jealousy in the community. All of these interactions created instances of togetherness but also created interruptions in community organizing. The personal interactions between extended members in the family, sometimes took hours, days, or weeks to overcome.

The Latina community organizers I interviewed acted from an egalitarian approach; they valued thinking about the good of the whole versus personal gain or recognition for themselves. A significant finding was that Latinas' interactions of nurturing and protecting other women and children, were typical of the gendered practices that took place within the community. As these women engaged in community activism efforts, they often defended and supported other women who faced sexism, discrimination, or racist actions. From an intersectional approach, Latinas understood the social and political implications for standing up for a quasi-family member, an *hermana* (sister) or *co-madre* (mother-like figure). The political nature of the extended activist family meant that you were part of a family (community), an organized group that would fight to protect any member.

Third, within the extended activist family that was formed, Latinas learned to balance and negotiate the ambivalence of relationships with quasi-family members, biological family members, and the community. Latina activists appreciated the tremendous influence of male Latino organizers, recognizing the esteemed position of authority related to men but these women grappled with the role they had in continuing gendered traditions with the children in the family (Collins, 1989). While many Latina activists shared similar cultural traditions with their blood-related family, they wanted to change and increase the role of women in community and political involvement. The Latina activists I interviewed understood that the social construction of masculinity and femininity was a learned behavior. Often Latina women learned from their mothers, fathers, and other family members about the traditional roles of women: To serve as caregivers and the

nurturers in families. At the same time, many women engaged in community activism efforts, in rather gendered styles, they became more conscious and vocal about the sexism in their Latin culture. Some of these Latinas experienced interruptions in community organizing efforts because Latino men demonstrated favoritism toward other men, accused Latinas of not being ‘the right kind of Latina,’ and their desire to keep women in the caregiver role—out of the limelight. In different circumstances, Latina activists found themselves analyzing conversations and interactions between Latin men and women: Stories of such interactions from my interviews show the ability for women to maneuver and negotiate difficult dialogues between Latin men and women. I analyzed the interpretations and experiences of Latina activists from an intersectional approach and how they were at the crux of either continuing tradition or creating a new kind of family.

In this chapter, I will share how community organizing and the extended activist family, “*la extension familiar*”, encompassed quasi-family members working alongside with each other, accomplishing the best outcomes for the family and community. While they worked toward an equal and just society, Latinas encountered sexism because of the deep seated cultural traditions between men and women. Second, the ambivalence of familial relationships produced an array of experiences, and some were helpful and some others were harmful. The next section will show how Latina activists shared how they relied on their activist family, *hermanas*, *hermanos*, *co-madres* and *co-padres*, to be their support system. Sometimes, Latina activists experienced disagreements with the quasi-family members and experienced disruptions with community organizing efforts. Latina women were often at the crossroad of negotiating and balancing their next steps and actions in accordance with the men in their activist family, biological family, and other men in the community.

### **Extending the Latino Family**

Many Latinas organized using what they saw as the best ideals of the belief system that governed their relationships with other women in the family, e.g. mutually supportive, non-self-

aggrandizing, and committed to the good of the whole rather than focused on the benefit of the individual. My interview participants shared the sentiments of nurturing and protecting their own family, and the community family. For them, if a family member was in pain or suffering, family members should try to resolve or alleviate the situation. The protection in the community was an extension of family work and was done by community organizing. A commonly held belief held was “*trabajamos por y para nuestra comunidad* (we worked for and with our community) (Antonia, Interview, 2015). Antonia shared:

You had to help your family and community members who lived within the strict boundary. If you lived within the boundaries, you understood that Spanish speaking persons were treated differently in mainstream institutions such as the church, employers or in the schools” (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

Antonia’s description of the tight-knit community highlights that restricted housing covenants existed in Milwaukee’s Latin community, she vividly remembered her first days after arriving from Puerto Rico. Often working class and poor families lived in substandard housing conditions. Antonia understood the racialization of Milwaukee’s south side community [area for Latins] was a tightly defined place and space with strict boundaries, where within a two-mile radius Latins had established a safe enclave. Outside of these boundaries, Latins were outsiders, yet even within the boundaries they were not always accepted in the church, the classroom, seen as equals for jobs. In many ways, the distinction of being ‘outsiders’ created a solidarity for the quasi-family members. The shared social inequality fostered an emotional bond for women who became “*hermanas and madrinas*” and some men became “*hermanos and padrinos*.”

### ***Hermana y madrina***

The Latino family structure is not a perfect system: It has a history of being patriarchal, where men adopt more dominant roles inside and outside of the home, and women take on roles of caregiving and nurturing (Saez, Casado, & Wade, 2010; Zayas & Solari, 1994). Nevertheless, these

roles could become empowering among Latina organizers. In my research, Latinas often cited that most women they organized with became closer than friends becoming an '*hermana*.' In Spanish, the term "*hermanas*" is a literal translation, but often is used in an endearing manner to signify to other Spanish speaking friends that the woman is just like a sister, that there is a personal and political relationship. As Bonnie Thornton Dill argues, sisterhood is generally understood as a relationship between women who nurture, support, and are loyal to one another because of a shared experience of oppression (1983). Solidarity is formed when a woman understands the other woman's experiences, listens and establishes an ongoing relationship. Eva, a Mexican American in her 30s when she found a sisterhood and shared:

Collaboration, we cared about individuals – we were friends, "*hermanas*" (sisters). It was heartfelt. It was the issue we were working on but also at a personal level. We made that commitment to each other that kind of helped us through tough times. The whole notion of collaboration, sisterhood was enriching. I felt that I got more out of it than I gave. I think many of us, we came from poor backgrounds and understood poverty, none of us ever felt better than anyone else and we understood when we were resource limited and how we could help each other out. All those things come into play (Eva, Interview, 2016).

Eva and her *hermanas* had shared an experience of survival; all of them coming from lower to middle-class families, they all had common experiences of feeling nothing was given to them, as they worked, raising money for themselves, quasi-family members, or others in need. Eva describes how she would give any and all of her possessions to help *una hermana (a sister)* in need. Eva's comment about "understanding poverty" speaks to knowing poor people, where they lived, knowledge of hardships and the scarcity of services. Each woman that Eva worked with knew what poor and Brown people needed: Better housing conditions, more employment, increased transportation services, affordable healthcare options, and increased grocery outlets. Each of them understood the lack of privilege in their lives, and the lives of other poor people. Being resource limited could be applied to all aspects of their lives, from financial, emotional and to physical limitations. Eva alludes

to many women having similar experiences, sharing feelings and listening to each other, which helped build a solidarity and alliance amongst most women. The statement of ‘got more out of it than I gave’ reflects Eva’s gratitude and appreciation of other women (Pheterson, 1986; Padilla, 2001).

Building on Thorton Dill’s (1983) research, sisterhood among Latinas and non-Latinas meant creating an emotional support system (Collins, 1989). Helping each other out could mean many women watched the kids if there was an event in the community, make dinners, spend time listening to each other, and understanding why some women might not be home for special moments with children. Not only was the support emotional, but it was political. The *hermanas* understood the systemic racism in low- income communities, and by collaborating and joining collective efforts, as a group they could overcome the many forms of oppression.

In some ways, the relationships that Eva had with her ‘*hermanas*’ reflects this idea of sisterhood, of creating strong nurturing relationships in their community. The extended family encompassed building a new system, one not built on favoritisms or strong patriarchal viewpoints, that many were familiar with in their culture, homes, and the church. For most of the Latina women, they grew up in traditional Spanish-speaking households where the male figures, fathers, and brothers were given positions of power and authority in the family. The idea of nurturing relationships with other women was an act of extending, or broadening, their familial network.

Antonia recalled:

Mary Anne, my *madrina*, was always empowering, she was not authoritarian, always complimenting me on my strengths, she always defended us [women]. The big executives would come from their downtown office, she [the central office boss] at times wanted to reprimand us, but Mary Anne demanded that the big boss had to go through Mary Anne. *Tú sabes, era la defensora* (You know, she was our advocate).” (Antonia, Interview, 2015).



Antonia here describes how Mary Anne McNulty was understood as “*madrina*,” the one who protected her quasi-family, of the “*hermanas*.” By this Antonia was including Mary Anne in the extended family of community organizers, but a family with particularly gendered relations, in which women could be and were counted on to support and mentor one another. The above description of Mary Anne, the matriarch, and thus the defender of the family, standing up to the administration shows how Mary Anne saw herself as the protector. From an intersectional lens, it shows how Mary Anne, a white woman, challenged and resisted the actions of another white woman from downtown, who thought she could bully and reprimand the Latina staff. Mary Anne’s protection of women was not limited to other white women. Mary Anne did not allow a person from the central office come and dictate to her staff about what was wrong with their work. In this case, “*la madrina*” (Mary Anne), was not looking to receive a promotion or look good for the central office boss. Instead she thought about the office dynamics, and her team of workers.

Antonia code switched to Spanish, stating, ‘*tu sabes era la defensora*’ (you know, she was the defender) (Poplack, 1980) because this phrase was better said in Spanish. It had more meaning, especially when she subtly said to me that “I personally knew.” I did know what Antonia described when she said, “*tu sabes*” (you know), because I consulted with Mary Anne on countless occasions on a number of different organizing campaigns. Mary Anne’s ability to analyze events, identify inequities in resource allocation, or hold people accountable, all were supportive actions of a mother-like figure, to Antonia (and to me).

### **Hermanos, padrinos, and co-padres**

These *hermanos* and *padrinos* wanted to strengthen and build the Latino community—they agreed this was family work. For many of the Latina organizers I interviewed, their biological family members’ ideas about gender roles meant that the men did not support their sisters’ work in ‘rebel’, or community activism work. This is where a clear distinction of how the quasi-family members or

‘community *hermanos*’ embraced the Latinas desire to be involved and create change in the community. Antonia recalled being involved in the open housing marches and the welfare marches in Milwaukee and balanced her anger and disappointment when her brother and mother decided she could not support campaigns outside of Wisconsin, especially the Wounded Knee Takeover or the *Venceremos* (We shall Overcome) Brigade to Cuba. For Antonia, both non-Wisconsin campaigns included her community family, *hermanos y hermanas* in the struggle for justice. Antonia felt comfortable and empowered to help those less fortunate, while her biological family thought she was being a nonconformist, untraditional, and indoctrinated into radical thinking. Antonia shared:

The *Venceremos* Brigade went to Cuba to help with the citrus harvest or sugar cane; a lot of leftists’ people went there. My mother would not let me go to the Wounded Knee Takeover or the “*Venceremos*” Brigade. My family did not understand how I was changing. I was raised to be a devout Catholic, obedient, respectful. My brother thought I was being brainwashed. I was pressured to obey my mother and brother and out of deep respect for my mother, I did not go to Cuba or Wounded Knee (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

Here Antonia describes how she chose not to participate in some campaigns because of her biological family’s expectations on being a respectful and devoted Catholic. Antonia’s family led a traditional life and they could not accept their daughter, sister to be engaged in civil disobedience and believed this to be outside of the margins of the Catholic teachings and belief system. Many of the young Latina organizers shared how their families, especially their brothers or fathers, showed disappointment about their community work. On the other hand, being involved in community organizing was accepted and encourage by *los hermanos*, the Latino activists. Each one spoke about how their social and emotional well-being was strengthened because of the mentoring and nurturing provided by male Latino community organizers. This could be partially explained because the parents and brothers who were recent arrivals and aspired to improve their lives in the United States, did not want their daughters to be involved in risky or revolutionary activities. For many Central and South Americans, they understood the ramifications of political involvement and might have

made some generalizations based on revolutionary work in their native homelands and thought some of the same consequences might occur in the United States.

In addition, some fathers and brothers discredited and minimized female family members' work: They expressed sentiments of "not being obedient," "being disrespectful," "protesting is a bad thing." On the other hand, Latino activists said, "Women know how to listen," or "Women go beyond what is needed" we're encouraging sentiments from their *hermanos* in the struggle. This new-found camaraderie and understanding by men who were the lead organizers and trainers in the '*movimiento*' (the movement) by the Latin American Union for Civil Rights (LAUCR) was refreshing to these Latina organizers. Throughout the interview, Antonia spoke of these men as father figures or 'real' brothers, because they understood her more than her own family:

During my junior year in high school, I was hired for the first after school bilingual program of LAUCR. This experience was 'an awakening.' I worked with Alberto, Roberto Hernandez, and Eduardo, they all gave me a sense of direction and showed me who I am (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

For Antonia, the experience of the male leadership in LAUCR differed greatly from the men in her biological family. The work of LAUCR in the 1970s sparked Antonia's lifelong commitment to activism and helping the less fortunate. Antonia was thrilled to engage with other like-minded individuals, male Latino organizers, who supported Latino ethnic identity, preserving the Spanish language and culture, while meeting the needs of the community. The notion of (LAUCR) was appealing to her because the organization acknowledged the need to address civil rights of a new immigrant community. Antonia recalled this 'awakening' was fostered and nurtured by her '*co-padres*' who understood her passion and commitment toward social justice for families and children in housing, education, employment, healthcare, and public safety. Antonia's *co-padres* encourage and supported her when they knew her own family would resist her new identity that conflicted with the traditional norms of the family. These norms, sometimes hopes, included, daughters going to

college, raising a family, and most importantly, being respectful in the community; not causing trouble.

Tina, a Central American from a middle-class background found support from “*hermanos*” when they invited her to participate in several community events. Tina shared:

I had a group of men [*hermanos*] who were instrumental in teaching me, Alberto, Manuel, and Arturo, they showed me how to participate in fundraisers, political meetings and community hearings. We thought in equality for employment, maintenance of the streets, landlords who were ripping off the community, health issues and other issues not being addressed by the Mayor or the alderman (Tina, Interview, 2015).

Tina’s account of *hermanos* in community organizing, helped her analyze systemic racism and discrimination in the everyday lives of the community. The *hermanos* mentored Tina on how to effectively raise money, the importance of accountability with public officials, and inclusivity with residents. The *hermanos* who led specific nonprofit organizations like LAUCR, UMOS, CCE-CB, El Centro Hispano, Journey House, United Community Center and AWOC taught Tina, and other women, how to analyze the multifaceted aspects of organizational and institutional systems of oppression and discrimination. All of the issues related to jobs, the safety of public streets, and health programs all impacted children and families. Again, another example of how community organizing is the extended activist family, “*la extension familiar*.”

### **Support from neighborhood life and the church**

The Latina activists I interviewed shared how by living in close proximity to one another they learned about their shared challenges with affordable housing options, the discrimination within the school system, the lack of employment opportunities, and the need to learn to speak English. Often, when they talked with each other at the grocery store, or on the front porch, they learned about each other’s lives, the personal heartache of relationships, issues of new immigrants, and the inability to fight for issues because they lived in a very Polish American community with minimal

support programs and services for Latino immigrants. Latinas would talk to each other, learn from each other on how to navigate the system and do what was best for their loved ones. According to Paulina, a third generation Mexican American who became active in the 1980s and 1990s, recalled:

Growing up on the near south side in 1960, I learned about the issues at Luna grocery store in the neighborhood near 5<sup>th</sup> and National Avenue. This was the first store, then it was the Gutierrez store. You would hear the stories about the men, the suffering of some women, we were trained that these were conversations of adults. We knew from hearing, we were always there. You also learned about any aspect of community life in the church. If you had a problem, needed a job, you talked to the priest, they lived in the community and were always there. The church played a significant role in community development, especially because so many of us came from different countries where religion was important. In the 50s, early 60s – the church was significant (Paulina, Interview, 2015).

Paulina's recollection of listening to the conversations of adults was commonplace because she mentioned learning about the issues from a female perspective—the anguish women experienced at the expense of some men and how these private conversations took place in a public setting. In addition, Paulina mentions the importance of the church, because newcomers to Milwaukee came from small villages, large cities, and different countries throughout the Caribbean, Central and South America in the early 1960s, but shared the beliefs and practices of Catholicism. The church sustained and helped build Milwaukee's Latino community. This anchor institution provided not only spiritual guidance, but religious leaders rooted in the neighborhood could provide information about resources and programs. The Catholic Church in Milwaukee was, and still is, critical for neighborhood growth and development.

### **The Ambivalence of *Familismo* in Latinas' Community Organizing with Latino Men**

A central tenet in the Hispanic family is the male-dominated patriarchal system, where the father is the head of household, displaying authority, decisiveness, and the protector of the family. Male superiority became popularized as '*machismo*' and defined social gender roles in families and communities (Quiñones Mayo & Resnick, 1996; Mayo, 1997). The meaning of *machismo* has changed

over time, once describing an endearing, father-like figure, but now describes men who are insensitive to women's needs. Although Latin men in community organizing supported and nurtured Latina organizers' presence, the cultural concept of Latin men being the authoritative figure resulting in the Latinas' having to balance, negotiate or concede in these situations. Some of the Latina activists I interviewed shared stories of interactions or events where the cultural traditions of male authority were questioned, and in those moments experienced and became more conscious of preferential treatment to Latinos. Latina activists wanted social equality in terms of hours worked, equal pay, and accountability.

### **Nurturing and protecting family**

Although Tina had supportive men in her life to teach her about community organizing, when it came to family work among Latina community organizers, many women had those responsibilities. Latinas shared the demands of community organizing and family work. Latinas brought their children to community organizing meetings and events; the presence of the children shows how the Latina activists involved in organizing was an extension of the family life. Latina activists told me how the *hermanas* or *co-madres* would collectively think about activities, games, and coordinating meals for children while they worked and strategized on campaigns (Eva, Tina, Raquel, Claudia, Antonia interviews, 2015-2016). Tina recalled how most women's kids became close friends and would play games with each other while the women were strategizing and talking about campaigns. In many ways, the children of the *hermanas* became "*primos*" or cousins. Tina shared, 'sometimes they were crawling underneath the table while we are working' (Tina, Interview, 2015). Again, this type of dynamic is acceptable in a family-like setting, a place where many activities, and conversations are taking place at the table, (or in this case on the floor) with children, demonstrates how community organizing is an extension of family work.

A key difference between male and female Latin community organizers was that most women were still held responsible for family work, so they brought their children to organizing and planning meetings; whereas many of the male organizers did not have to bring the children to these events. This impacted Latinas because they double their work load responsibilities outside of the home while still having to maintain an orderly and stable home life. All of this additional responsibility of caregiving required time management skills, balancing stressful situations, and finding a support system. The male organizer could rely on female partners, or relatives in their biological family to watch and care for the children while they organized. The disparity of male and female organizers approach to the care of their children shows how Latina activists managed and negotiated the care of all the children, and the differences between their supportive male counterparts. Latina activists brought their children to community organizing events, strategizing sessions, and managed their children at community events, in addition to their fulltime jobs and community organizing efforts. I personally can attest to this sentiment: During my organizing days, my son went to meetings, attended rallies, and walked with me in the neighborhood knocking on doors. Only one Latina shared how a Latino organizer took their child to community organizing meetings. It was the exception, not the norm. I did not ask Latino male organizers about their lives and support systems, but based upon my own experience, and listening to the Latina activists, the “*hermanos*” who had young children were able to effectively organize at all hours of the day, because they had a support system in place, in many cases it was women in their biological family. These practices and traditions of a successful career in community organizing embodied a sentiment and practice by Saul Alinsky of working twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week (Alinsky, 2010). This practice was not feasible for mothers with families and young children. Alinsky did believe the qualities of a good organizer could be found in a man or woman but when he referenced the

characteristics of curiosity, irreverence, imagination, sense of humor, idealist, politically integrated, a strong ego and communicative – Alinsky described the person as a male organizer (1971).

### **Rendered invisible**

A different experience of organizing and supporting behind the line, was done out of necessity, not by choice. Recounting Jacqueline's experience of working in a nonprofit organization, she shared her numerous humiliating experiences of being a community organizer, working with four men of diverse backgrounds with sexist attitudes. Jacqueline, a white young single mother, shared:

I read the book called the *Addictive Organization* (Schaef & Fassell, 1988). This book opened my eyes and the authors highlighted how different organizations run on a model of alcoholism, and I was working for four different types of alcoholics. They didn't listen to me. I did all the cleaning, getting everything, doing all preliminary work, and they would get all the photo opportunities. I would go home and cry. I cried on the job. I was mad and angry. I worked with four guys and I was ready to kill them. They were tears of anger but it was perceived as tears of weakness" (Jacqueline, Interview, 2016).

In Jacqueline's case, she was a single mother, she worked in a hostile work environment, and did all the work required, but the men were always receiving the accolades. She had to suppress her anger, quell her voice, and do all the grunt work. She felt unappreciated, and never felt that she did her work properly. It is completely ironic that an organization located in Milwaukee's Latino community advocating for workforce development issues, would treat one of their own employees such a disrespectful way. Jacqueline mentioned earlier in the interview that since she was a single mother, she had no choice in finding other employment, and she cried on and off the job because she was trapped. After several years, she was finally able to leave the organization, and find more fulfilling work, but never returned to community organizing.

Jacqueline was committed to helping the Latin community, but given the oppressive nature of that workplace, she was emotionally broken and could not continue. Not only was Jacqueline



emotionally exhausted from community work, but then she found herself with negative energy treating her daughter badly after working all day. Jacqueline shared:

I was a single mother of one, I missed all the initial things, first things, the daycare potty trained my daughter, a quarter of my salary went to daycare. It was difficult but when I would come home from my job and yell at her because her socks were on the floor – I realized this was not working and had to find a better job, because I came home from the job with all the stress (Jacqueline, Interview, 2016).

On top of the challenges of being a working mother, the sexist conditions of that community organizing workplace led Jacqueline to quit organizing. The work of community organizing is hard - the issues are usually difficult ones - but to experience sexist and discriminatory actions while doing community organizing work only compounds the challenges and did not benefit anyone. This took such a toll on Jacqueline, that her potential future community organizing contributions could not happen. Jacqueline's struggle, of balancing the demands of working outside the home and caring for a young child, continues to be a struggle for women. As many women engaged in community activism efforts in rather traditionally gendered styles, they became more conscious and vocal about the sexism in their Latin culture, – though they did not necessarily agree on how to address it. Differences among women emerged regarding women taking on leadership positions, and the challenging discourses with Latin and white men became more common.

### **Latinas stayed out of the limelight**

Another Latina organizer, Marjorie, recalled how other Latinas did all the work in preparation for a campaign, and she assumed that one of the Latinas would be nominated for a leadership position. This situation of women being in a supportive role to Latino male activists was reported by many of my interview participants (Tina, Eva, Raquel, Claudia, Paulina, Antonia, Dalia interviews, 2015-2016). The following statement shows how Latinas relegated the leadership position to the men. Marjorie shared:

Most women did the heavy lifting, women attended all the meetings, but it was the men who were nominated to leadership positions. It was a lesson as an organizer don't assume things will turn out the way you wished for. I assumed people who did the hard work would get the recognition of their peers. Women took a step back, it was kind of mutual" (Marjorie, Interview, 2016).

Multiple lessons can be learned from Marjorie's statement regarding the role of the organizer, as well as cultural traditions and how women might choose to adhere to the gender conforming roles of Latino culture. As the organizer, Marjorie made some assumptions that some women would want to jump into a leadership role. Marjorie clearly saw the potential of most women, because they were already demonstrating their abilities, but this group of Latinas would not take what they saw as a man's job. It is possible that they did not take the leadership role from male activists because of their sense of loyalty, and not wanting to alienate them, since their biological family was already unsupportive. If Latina activists took the roles from Latino activists, it could have compromised community organizing efforts, because of the political and cultural impacts of a woman being in a dominant leadership role.

Latinas in secondary roles, or not being in the forefront, on various organizing activities happened because of paternalistic cultural traditions. Working behind the line is a gendered decision more so for women than men. Women were relegated to doing the 'heavy lifting' or 'real work', while the men basked in the accomplishments or gained leadership positions. Would it ever be the case that the men would do all the work, take a step back, and women would get all the credit for their work? Yet, this is exactly what happened, time and time again, with Latina activists.

### **Sexism, Machismo, Leadership, and Privilege**

Latina activists who were developing into leadership positions in the community were at the crossroads of the opportunities and barriers in their careers as community activists. For some, having the experience of community activism the skill sets of strategy, organizing, and developing leadership abilities were qualities that transferred to nonprofit, municipal and corporate

environments. In several of the interviews with Latin and non-Latin activists, the years of working on successful campaigns, ability to mobilize hundreds of people, and strategize on campaigns, were excellent skills that could be useful and replicated in different careers outside of organizing. As Latina activists were offered different opportunities in a variety of levels in government, nonprofit work, or public office, many continued to work on their self-confidence, motivation, and leadership training. At the same time, Latina and non-Latina activists found themselves confronting new external barriers in the workplace. Most women shared how the relationships of the extended family, “*la extension familiar*”, were the cornerstone of how women supported each other.

### **Appointed positions in local and state government**

All of us women have had our run-ins, many of us had run-ins with Latino men because we were emerging as leaders in our community. When I was hired by the Mayor, I got pulled aside by a Latino agency director and he said, ‘Basically, we don’t know why you got this job, the Mayor’s Office didn’t ask us who we wanted to work for the Mayor. We can get the Mayor out of office if we want, you are lucky you have the job.’

I blew them off (laughed at them), I think I had a margarita in my hand at the time. We were at a bar. Machismo was strong but it still blew me away. Later that night, I remember thinking ‘why would you guys do that to us’” (Eva, Interview, 2016).

This interaction of Eva and the male executive director of a nonprofit agency speaks volumes about the disingenuous relationships in Milwaukee’s Latino community. Instead of being supportive that a Latina was hired and promoted to a senior level position in City Hall, the executive director not only spoke to Eva in a condescending manner, questioning her credentials but also blaming her for the decisions of the Mayor. He made accusations against Eva, shaming and passing judgment on her for not seeking the opinion or approval from some Latinos in the community. The arrogance of him stating that “we [Latin men] can get him out of office, be lucky you have a job” not only demonstrates his innate belief of having power and authority over Latina women, but also his presumed power to unseat an elected city official. The fact that Eva never sought advice from

Latino leaders was an affront and threatened some Latin men's positions or status in the community. I want to make a clear distinction that Latina activists had to handle and negotiate the multiple reactions from their biological family, the supportive male organizers (*hermanos*) and then Latino men in the broader community, such as the agency director.

Regardless, Eva recalled how she did not take it too seriously because she was enjoying a cocktail that evening (Eva, Interview, 2016). It was evident to me from the interview with Eva, that she had reached a certain level of empowerment and was not shaken by this type of treatment from a Latino in her community. It infuriated her, yet it confused her that someone who was supposed to be on her side would act this way. Eva recalled how she vented with some of the *hermanas* and *co-madres* in her network to deal with the issue. Some of the male dominated environments were supportive, others exploitive, yet despite these interactions Latina activists persevered and continued working to improve the community for themselves and their families.

### **Privileged treatment**

The differential treatment between Latino and Latinas sometimes created tension or frustration among colleagues working in community organizing. Raquel shared the following about how Eduardo, a lead organizer, treated her in contrast to another male organizer named Mauricio:

Mauricio operated in a 'thug like manner—either his way or no way.' Eduardo, lead organizer, tried to bring him under his wing; he provided him with funding. Mauricio would walk into meetings with his entourage. He had to show he had power. I would get into it with both, Mauricio and Eduardo because I would say, 'Mauricio wasn't doing shit, how long are you going to keep giving him money?' and Eduardo would say, 'Don't worry about it, it will all work out' (Raquel, Interview, 2015).

Raquel questioned the lead organizer about the preferential treatment given to Mauricio and wanted him held accountable for his actions. Mauricio walked into a meeting with "his entourage," i.e. denotes more than two men who demonstrated a physical presence of authority. Eduardo minimized Raquel's desire for accountability, casting her frustrations as purely emotional by saying,

‘Don’t worry about it.’ In this instance, according to the men’s perspective, Raquel’s feelings and instincts were ‘wrong,’ and not the proper way of thinking about a Latino. This statement begs the question of whether the same treatment would have occurred with women organizers. The privileged position of men is apparent in the above situation, demonstrating gendered favoritism within Raquel’s relationship with an *hermano*. Raquel valued the mentorship and training provided by the lead organizers, but was frustrated and tired of the discrimination, sexism, and paternalistic attitudes of an “*hermano*.” Raquel faced hypocritical actions from Eduardo, because in one instance, Raquel is empowered to organize the community, fight for injustice, speak out against oppressive actions, yet when she questions the lead organizer, he stops supporting her thoughts in accountability.

The brotherhood and the privileged position Latino men had with each other is a dominant theme. If Eduardo would have spoken out on behalf of Raquel, the implications on Eduardo’s credibility would have been at stake. Raquel’s cultural competence in the Latino community allowed her to understand the social dynamics of male and female relations, and she empathized with Eduardo and did not make a bigger deal of the situation. This is a power relationship that Latinas negotiated when they confronted issues of gender in community organizing activities.

### **“You’re not the right kind of Latina”**

Some Latinas faced discrimination and harassment by some Latinos who questioned their legitimacy in advocating for Latina rights in Milwaukee, based on their place of birth or ethnicity. Below Eva describes the oppressive treatment by a male organizer when she joined the “Latina Task Force.” Blanca, a South American woman, faced discrimination when Joshua, a Chicano stated:

‘You are not Chicana<sup>19</sup>, you should not be part of this community.’ I saw how upset Blanca was so I told her to forget what he said, ignore him (Eva, Interview, 2016).

Blanca was discriminated against based on her ethnicity and gender by a *hermano*. How did this U.S. born Latino feel that he had the right to question a South American woman about her identity and her inclusion in the Latina Task Force? Would Joshua have challenged a South American man? Joshua’s understanding of the Latina Task Force was skewed from the beginning; Joshua’s male superiority is shown when he declared that ethnicity was a qualifier, and his suggestion of who was to be included in the community. The identity of Latinos is complex; as shown in the above dialogue, the immigrant who choose to live in the U.S. wants to identify and have a sense of belonging with other Latinos in the U.S. For a U.S. born Latino, the experiences and interactions are different from foreign-born Latinos, and how these different groups can reconcile their differences is a conversation that continues today. From an intersectional lens, this man demonstrates a paternalistic and sexist attitude toward women who were not born in the United States. Eva recognized the cultural dynamics of a Latino male attempting to dictate what was right or acceptable, for the Latina Task Force, and quickly responded in support of Blanca, a South American woman. Eva was part of a larger coalition that was meeting the needs of Latinas: Most women were creating a sense of belonging, an increased identity in the Pan-Latino community. For Eva, and other Latina activists, the demand by some Latinos was unacceptable; the Latinas organizing together did not need or require permission from men in the community. If the woman wants to join an organization for and by women, they do not need nor require permission from a Latino born in the

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<sup>19</sup> Chicana/o denotes a woman or man of Mexican origin living in the southwestern part of the United States.

U.S. The dynamics of the Pan-Latino community in Milwaukee revealed discrimination, sexism, and chauvinism along with females more accepting of Puerto Rican, Mexicans, and even white females.

Latinas who were part of the Latina Task Force were united on broader issues of equality in the workplace and in the home but had to confront an issue within the Pan-Latino community of not being the ‘right Latina.’ In the above case, one Latino imposed his righteous and indignant attitudes of humiliating and chastising women, to delegitimize and devalue women’s work, so that they – the men – can maintain power within the community and not share power with many women. Unfortunately, Latinas faced this sexism by other Latinos and Latinas had to coach women to ignore their attitudes and treatment. This discrimination prevailed not only with mainstream organizations, but at times was practiced by Latinos in the community.

The Latina Task Force formed in the early 1980s did not interrogate or question women about their identities as South American, Central American, Puerto Rican, or Chicana (Arenas & Gómez, 2018). For Latina women, they only cared about gender, and a broad sense of ethnicity and culture. It is interesting to note that some Latinos differentiated Latinas into separate and inferior categories, instead of embracing the diverse groups of Latinas from around the globe. Eva provides a great analysis of how she and other friends, and Latina colleagues, did not differentiate Latinas based on the language spoken, origin of birth, color of skin, or citizenship status. Eva, a Mexican American, recalled:

The pan-Latino feature is interesting, Latinas, we didn’t care if you were from Central America, South America, or U.S. born. We [*hermanas*] didn’t care, it means a hill of beans to us. For some of the organizations, some of the Latino organizations, which were male-led it was either Puerto Rican or Mexican (Eva, Interview, 2016).

The above quotes from Eva, a Mexican American and Blanca, a South American, demonstrate how Latinas were more accepting and inclusive than some men. The formation of the pan-Latino community in Milwaukee in the early 1970s shows the differences of how some of the

Latina activists reacted to the sexist, machismo, and privileged attitudes of some in the community. The *hermanas* talked with each other, analyzing who and why the men said their offensive and oppressive remarks. In a geographically racialized community, the schisms within Milwaukee's pan-Latino community began to form. The origin of birth, the ability to speak English or Spanish, citizenship, and skin color became distinguishing factors of being accepted to some Latinos, but not everyone. For the Latina activists, the experienced social inequality of some non-*hermanos* helped build their solidarity, almost a gendered solidarity of the *hermanas*.

The pan-Latino community was driven mostly by Chicanos who relocated from the Southwest. Many of the male organizers led the Latin American Union for Civil Rights, marched for welfare reform, and for the rights of farmworkers. As the Puerto Rican community grew in Milwaukee, some young Puerto Rican men and women became more engaged in social justice campaigns. A community gathering filled with Chicano leadership, and a growing number of Puerto Ricans, demonstrated the competition, Antonia explained the following:

We were Brown berets and at the end of the meetings, the Chicanos would all raise their fists and say, 'Chicano Power.' The only one who stood up was Sebastian and he would say 'PR [Puerto Rican] Power' (Antonia, Interview, 2015).

Antonia was the only woman at this meeting, and she recalled the overall participation being Chicanos from the southwest who made Milwaukee their home. The raising of the fists and chanting 'Chicano Power' shows a great sense of pride within their ethnic group, but she and her Puerto Rican compatriot felt isolated. The Brown Beret meeting was supposed to be a coalition of persons from Central and South America, the Caribbean, and persons from the Southwestern parts of the U.S. When a member raised his fist and only chanted 'Chicano Power' he marginalized the other Latinos in the room. Not only by political identity but also with gender, note that he did not say 'Chicana Power.' Antonia spoke about knowing each community had distinct histories, different trajectories of transnational migration, different education levels, a variety of citizenship status' and



diverse abilities to speak English or Spanish. The differences between the groups who settled in different decades became more evident, sometimes it was based on gender, other times on ethnicity. This intersectional discrimination between Mexican and Puerto Rican descendants was profound because of the rights and privileges associated with citizenship status. For Puerto Ricans, although they had citizenship rights, did not mean they were not familiar with oppressive actions in schools, jobs, or the church. Sometimes in their case, their skin color or their heavy accent became the basis of discrimination. Not all Mexicans/Chicanos/Mexican Americans saw or appreciated the challenges of the Puerto Rican community, because for many of their people, some were undocumented, some were fearful of being deported, and some did not have the privilege to travel back and forth to their native homeland. A similar experience occurred with Tina and the dominance of male Chicanos. Tina recalled:

I was in different meetings in the late 1970s and early 1980s, it was always the Chicano brothers against the Madison group. Mary Anne McNulty and her network was more inclusive and she got things done (Tina, Interview, 2015).

From an intersectional lens, Tina articulates that men were divided not only by ethnicity, but by educational attainment, referencing how the Chicanos were a group of men who identified on their race and ethnicity and the Madison group were Latino males with degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The description of the two dominant male groups distinguishes the men between working class versus those of higher class with college degrees. Each group had a brotherhood, a group of *hermanos* within the pan-Latino community. A solidarity similar to the sisterhood of Latinas. Within the pan-Latino community, sometimes a schism existed not only by gender and ethnicity, but with men it was between class and education. Often women were not even included in the conversations between the men which shows another example of the discrimination, sexist, and privileged behaviors of the men within the pan-Latino community.

Although, each group might have been working collectively within their own group of *hermanos*, Latinas worked across ethnicity, race, class, and gender to “to get things done.”

## Conclusion

Latina activists believed and acted upon their belief that the work of community organizing was an extension of taking care of the family. Latinas built on the concept of *familismo* and worked to improve the lives of people in the neighborhood, at church, in schools, or on the job. This extension of advocating for the community family, is a practice I call “*la extension familiar*.” As Latina organizers worked in their community, addressing discrimination, racism based on their gender, ethnicity or class, they formed a new quasi-family, one based on mutual belief systems of helping those who were less fortunate. This new family was based on community activism efforts, and women who were supportive and empowering were called “*madrinas, co-madres* and *hermanas*.” This sentimentality was extended to supportive men in activism efforts, and they were called, “*padrinos, co-padres* and *hermanos*.”

The Latina activists shared how the quasi-family was sometimes more supportive than their biological families, issues of traditional roles of women being the caregiver or taking on more conventional career choices other than community organizing. As Latinas organized in-between their own family, the quasi-family and the general community, they sometimes were faced with uncertain relationships, ranging from supportive to non-supportive or harsh reactions to their involvement. Latinas acted in solidarity with other Latinas and non-Latinas to improve Milwaukee’s Latin community.

As *hermanas* and *co-madres* chose to organize and build Milwaukee’s Latin community, they were able to engage in meetings and events in the evenings and weekends because of the support of other women. Most women spoke about how they looked after each other and their kids. The

Latinas and non-Latinas shared how the *hermanas* and *co-madres* were thinking collectively, always thinking about each other, protecting the family.

Sometimes because women worked behind the scenes on different organizing campaigns, Latinas were often rendered invisible. Latinas had become accustomed of staying out of the limelight, in some ways transferring leadership to men. Latinas eventually learned to have the confidence and build leadership skills to be at the forefront of organizing campaigns or in leadership positions. As Latinas accepted untraditional appointments in government agencies, they were met with resistance by some individuals in the community. Latinas endured any negative reaction and continued to work for children and families.

Similar to within biological families, the community organizing or the “quasi-family” exercised preferential treatment with some of its members. Specifically, some men showed favoritism or lack of accountability to Latino community organizers versus Latina community organizers. Latinas were socially conscious of these differences and spoke up against the privileged position of men. For many of the Latinas, they were all too familiar with old-fashioned cultural traditions of Latino men being inherently superior to women.

Latins come from a number of different countries, some speak Spanish, some only speak English, some have different phenotypes, some are U.S. born and others are immigrants, but Latinas did not focus on any of those details. Instead, the Latina Task Force in the early 1980s accepted women for who they were and did not question their identity. In some instances, Latinas were interrogated and criticized for the not being the right kind of Latina. Latinas worked diligently against sexism, privilege and *machista* attitudes in the community.

This chapter has described *familismo* (familiness), the practice of supporting, building a community awareness, to improve the well-being of others. In so doing, Latinos worked on a number of community organizing campaigns, extending their activism to the community with a

practice I called '*la extension familiar*.' The extended family literally took on similar roles and responsibilities of mother-like, father-like, sister-like and brother-like roles but it created a number of conflicting family dynamics. In many ways, the community organizing family promoted a "*familismo*", at times being very helpful, while other times leading to family dynamics of patriarchy to re-appear in some work relationships of community organizing.

## Chapter 8

### Conclusion

During my coursework in Urban Studies, I encountered a topic at the juncture of my research interests and personal history: The papers of Milwaukee activist Mary Ann McNulty. Mary Ann's activism led to my realization that there were untold and unheard stories of Latinas. These stories have a great to teach us about who, what, when, where and why to organize especially across the lines of nationality, ethnicity and even race.

The purpose of my dissertation is to show how Latinas and non-Latinas balanced, negotiated and succeeded in community organizing when they were in the midst of multiple oppressive power relations. It was not a race-only, gender-only, class-only, language-only, ethnicity-only, citizenship-only issue; many times, it was many or all of the above axes of oppression shaping the scenarios Latinas confronted. My empirical contribution is bringing forth stories of women, especially Latina activists whose contributions have not been recognized, including the community organizer and later Common Council member Mary Ann McNulty, but also far less known activists. I also tell the story of the growth of Milwaukee's Latino community in relation to the ethnic and racial conflicts of the 1960s to 1980s in Milwaukee. My theoretical contributions are twofold: I use an intersectionality framework to understand the complexities of power and identity and how these shaped the work of these activists in Milwaukee. Second, I argue that Latinas engaged in activism using the concept of family, building and extending the family to the community, which I name the *extension familiar*.

In preparation of research, I immersed myself with relevant literatures from five main disciplines. Latina/o studies, Community organizing literature, Critical Race Theory, LatCrit Theory, and Intersectionality Theory. I used Qualitative methods to conduct my research. Drawing on in depth **interviews** resulted with different points of view depending on their gender, race, class,

ethnicity, and citizenship. I interviewed over thirty individuals – organizers, community development specialists, clergy, appointed and elected officials. All of these individuals could provide historical background and contextual information about the time and place of Milwaukee's south side. Another method of data collections was Archival research: I used the Mary Ann McNulty collection and the Archives of UWM, Marquette University and the Historical Society. I sought meaning from all the data collected at the archives and all interviews. I interpreted and coded the data looking for themes. In the dissertation, I present my findings in 4 chapters.

In chapter four I show how interethnic and interracial relations between Milwaukee's Polonia and the new Latin community led to community activism. The ethnic transition from a predominant Polish community to Latino neighborhood was monumental. The Polish community had dominance in every aspect of life, social, political, and economic. These individuals were in leadership positions in city government, law enforcement, nonprofit groups/associations, neighborhoods, churches, and businesses. As the Latin community increased in populations they simultaneously gained ethnic identity consciousness with more awareness to inequalities, discrimination and racist actions from the white community. This awakening led to community organizing, straining interethnic and interracial relations and led to continued segregation, whites fled to the inner ring suburbs, and Latins/Blacks moved to the urban core.

My key findings in chapter five center on Mary Ann McNulty's unconventional, creative tactics in her community organizing campaigns. At the core of her activism was building coalitions and establishing relationships across multiple intersections. The inclusion of diverse stakeholders, constant communication, and accountability were characteristics of successful organizing. Mary Ann's work as a newcomer, an "outsider," resonated with women who felt outside with respect to male and female white centric society, and the predominance of traditional practices in Latin community. Mary Ann's contributions in healthcare promotion, youth development, cultural

programing, educational reform, housing, and recreational development were gendered discourses that inspired, motivated, and influenced Latinas and non-Latinas to think, analyze and act.

In chapter six I provide the perspectives from Latina and non-Latina centered activism efforts. Listening to the scholarly narratives of Latina women, I learned about the histories, experiences of Latinas and how “herstory” or “*ellacuenta*” has been omitted, overlooked, and ignored within community organizing efforts. The gendered epistemology of how women negotiated, strategized, and supported each other in the field of activism is one that requires more scholarship. The cultural traditions and expectations of Latinas complicated and fostered activism efforts in Milwaukee. Common themes arose during the interviews. Latinas talked about how they learned how to find their voices – that is, to speak out and advocate for their own self-interests and those of the community. They also navigated and negotiated multiple oppressions of race, class, gender, and ethnicity. In addition, all the women shared how they mastered the skills of community organizing “on the job” in an apprentice like setting. Within the pan-Latina diaspora, Latinas spoke of the dichotomy between their “*hermanos* in the struggle” and their blood-related family members, the challenges of embedded cultural practices of femininity, caregiving role and obedience, and their desire to break out of the mold and improve the community. The significance of this chapter is that Latinas worked on issues that were near and dear to them; all of these have efforts have had longstanding impact and sustainability in improving the quality of life in the city of Milwaukee. From the sustainment of the Felix Mantilla Little League, the creation of the Gifted and Talented Program for Bilingual Children in MPS, and the Sixteenth Street Community Health Center. The gendered discourses and actions developed coalitions and a bond between women, between activists, and did create some tensions with men, but in the end, they overcame those differences and showed how organizing matters.

In chapter seven, I show how activism in Milwaukee's Latin community embodied the concept of family or familismo. This chapter highlights how "family" is incorporated into the community, the practice of supporting and extending the concept of family into the community, a practice I call "*la extension familiar*." For many who organized in the community, the concept of mother, father, sister and brother like individuals becoming quasi-like family members. Similar to any family, within the extended community organizing family, "*hermanas and hermanos en la lucha*" encountered special bonds, disagreements, favoritism and jealousy. This chapter highlights how the extended family embraced and fought for the well-being of others, an egalitarian approach, hoping to think of the good of the whole versus an individual. In these moments, Latinas coalesced and supported each other if any of them faced sexism, discrimination, favoritism, or racist actions.

The women learned that organizing was not only political in the community but within their biological family but their community organizing family – requiring constant negotiation, compromise and reflection. At times, women were subjugated to remarks of serving in a caregiver role, being questioned about their identity. Given the multiple identities of Latinas, my research uncovered how using an intersectional framework with community organizing dispelled a notion that community organizing was disrespectful, "a bad thing," or unladylike and how they overcame multiple oppressions and made a difference in improving the quality of life in Milwaukee.

All of the advocacy work related to affordable quality housing, programs and services to the most marginalized populations – low income and the elderly, educational success and pipelines to the trades or four-year institutions start at a neighborhood level. The activism that took a stronghold in the 1970s has led to greater numbers of Latinas in public office, in classrooms, in board rooms, on different boards and commissions. I would argue it can be attributed to their empowerment and ability to think, analyze and act. The contributions of Latina activists have contributed to a greater quality of life in Milwaukee for children and families.



Some of the limitations of my research were the number of people to interview, my list climbed to 50 individuals. Some of the interviews did not reveal as much as I expected. Some women were guarded and told me off the record information that was not useable. Another limitation of my research was my decision to stay focused on community activism in neighborhoods, especially a few neighborhoods on the south side of Milwaukee. Since I have the MAM collection, I wanted to research and interview individuals about policy decisions regarding the naming of the Fr. Groppi Bridge, including Mary Anne McNulty's role and vote on this policy decision. That line of investigation would be very interesting but was not germane to my research.

My research has uncovered hidden archives, that in the future I may work to have placed with public institutions that can preserve them and make them available for others' research. One third of the participants had collections in their homes. Why did they save these collections? What are their hopes for these collections, and would they consider donating to UWM Archives? This could complement the *Somos Latinas* collection (release date of May 19). I would also like to explore the possibility of a dual enrolled students in high school and UWM: An opportunity exists to have students learn about local history whether it is black, white, Native, Southeast Asian, Middle Eastern or Latin. Further, drawing on my own and related research, I would love to teach courses in Urban Studies or one of its affiliated departments.

In the future, I want to continue my work at UWM, and I have found a niche in fund development. In the last three years, I have been the lead grant writer at EQI, and have raised nearly 2 million dollars. Prior to that I worked on a grant of 3.5 million with the UCC/UWM partnership. My work in community-university partnership is work that I love to do. Again, I also hope to teach in one of the departments of Urban Studies in the future. When I first started this work, Stephen Percy and I talked about a transition plan, and I had hoped on getting my PhD and leading CUIR. With CUIR gone, I aim to find other ways to do community-university partnership.

As I finish this dissertation, I find myself thinking about the importance of community organizing. Organizing is political. Organizing creates competing identities. Organizing can be gendered. Organizing confronts poverty, racism, inequality and discrimination. Organizing is hopeful and invigorating. Community Organizing is Community and Identity Development.

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## **APPENDIX A**

### **Interview Questions**

#### **General Ethnographic Questions**

- a. Would you be willing to share your story about how your family ended up in Wisconsin?
- b. Can you tell me about your educational background? High School? Any college?
- c. Were you aware of social movements in the community? If so which ones? Where you involved in any?

#### **General Description of Milwaukee's Latino community**

- a. Can you describe the near south side in terms of ethnicity and the new immigrant groups?
- b. What were Latinos fighting for specifically in terms of jobs (where), housing, education, nonprofits or church?

#### **Activism in the 1970s and 1980s**

- a. What kind of work were you involved in professionally and personally during those decades?
- b. How were you involved in community development/organizing efforts? Can you describe how nationality (place of origin) impacted work in the community? If so, please describe.
- c. What does community development /community organizing mean to you?
- d. When you were thinking about community development/organizing at that time, were there any particular neighborhoods you had in mind? (Please be specific with names of neighborhoods or streets.)
- e. How did neighborhood settlement patterns (Poles, Germans, Latino/as on Southside vs. African Americans on Northside) affect community organizing?

#### **Leadership styles by race and gender**

- a. Did you see or experience any difference in how women did this type of work? Were there any women who were inspirational or role model in your work that influenced you?
- b. Are there any women who come to mind during the 1970s and 1980s who challenged the status quo in community development? If so, how or what did they do?
- c. Did you have any experience or knowledge of Mary Anne McNulty's role in community development or community organizing? What was her gift? How did she align folks? What was her proudest and most difficult moment?
- d. Were the particular places that were more (or less) comfortable for you-as a woman? As an activist? As a woman of color? As a woman in appointed position by the community?

**Balance of work, home, and community**

- a. Can you share how you balanced multiple roles in the community, professional life and personal life?
- b. How do previous community organizers manage and negotiate issues when they lead programs or services in nonprofit agencies or government entities?
- c. Was there any informal support group or gatherings?
- d. What was the difference for women vs. men in community development efforts?

**Benefits**

- a. Can you give examples that your felt were successful, and maybe some instances where the project did not advance the way you would have hoped?
- b. What were benefits of involvement in community development efforts? For your workplace? For the community organization? Community at large?

**Challenges**

- a. What have been the drawbacks of community development efforts? For your workplace? For the community organization? Community at large?

## APPENDIX B

### Notification of IRB Exempt Status



Department of University Safety & Assurances

#### New Study - Notice of IRB Exempt Status

Date: February 25, 2015

To: Kristin Sziarto, PhD  
Dept: Urban Studies

Cc: Patricia Najera

IRB#: 15.236

Title: Gendered Perspectives on Community Development

Jessica Rice  
IRB Administrator  
Institutional Review Board  
Engelmann 270  
P. O. Box 413  
Milwaukee, WI 53201-0413  
(414) 229-3182 phone  
(414) 229-6729 fax

<http://www.irb.uwm.edu>  
[ricej@uwm.edu](mailto:ricej@uwm.edu)

After review of your research protocol by the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee Institutional Review Board, your protocol has been granted Exempt Status under Category 2 as governed by 45 CFR 46.101(b).

On February 26, 2015, this protocol was approved as exempt for a period of three years. IRB approval will expire on February 25, 2018. If you plan to continue any research related activities (e.g., enrollment of subjects, study interventions, data analysis, etc.) past the expiration date, please respond to the IRB's status request that will be sent by email approximately two weeks before the expiration date. If the study is closed or completed before the IRB expiration date, you may notify the IRB by sending an email to [irbinfo@uwm.edu](mailto:irbinfo@uwm.edu) with the study number and the status so we can keep our study records accurate.

Any proposed changes to the protocol must be reviewed by the IRB before implementation, unless the change is specifically necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects. The principal investigator is responsible for adhering to the policies and guidelines set forth by the UWM IRB, maintaining proper documentation of study records and promptly reporting to the IRB any adverse events which require reporting. The principal investigator is also responsible for ensuring that all study staff receive appropriate training in the ethical guidelines of conducting human subjects research.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to adhere to UWM and UW System Policies, and any applicable state and federal laws governing activities which are independent of IRB review/approval (e.g., FERPA, Radiation Safety, UWM Data Security, UW System policy on Prizes, Awards and Gifts, state gambling laws, etc.). When conducting research at institutions outside of UWM, be sure to obtain permission and/or approval as required by their policies.

Contact the IRB office if you have any further questions. Thank you for your cooperation and best wishes for a successful project

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jessica P. Rice".

Jessica P. Rice  
IRB Administrator

## APPENDIX C

### McNulty Collection<sup>20</sup>

#### Box 1 – Personal papers and SWEAT

Description	Location
McNulty Family Letters	Box 1, Folder 1
McNulty, Wonder Years	Box 1, Folder 2
Federal Bureau Investigation – Office Clerk	Box 1, Folder 3
U.S. Census Bureau – Office Manager	Box 1, Folder 4
Resume	Box 1, Folder 5
Nicaraguan Mission Trip	Box 1, Folder 6
<i>Centro Cultural Educativo Chicano - Boricua</i> School, CCE-CB	Box 1, Folder 7
Posters- political in nature	Box 1, Folder 8
Pictures – random photos of community events	Box 1, Folder 9
SWEAT, miscellaneous papers	Box 1, Folder 10
SWEAT, Strategic Plan	Box 1, Folder 11
SWEAT, Housing	Box 1, Folder 12
SWEAT, Senior Citizens	Box 1, Folder 13
SWEAT, Tot Lot (park)	Box 1, Folder 14
SWEAT, Unemployment program	Box 1, Folder 15
SWEAT, Recycling program	Box 1, Folder 16
SWEAT, <i>The Milwaukee Journal</i> Editorials	Box 1, Folder 17
SWEAT, Invoices	Box 1, Folder 18
Committee for a Better Neighborhood – Milwaukee County Expressway	Box 1, Folder 19
Southside Coalition for Survival	Box 1, Folder 20
Massignani, Mary Lou	Box 1, Folder 21
<i>La Guardia</i> newspaper articles	Box 1, Folder 22
<i>The Milwaukee Journal</i> newspaper articles	Box 1, Folder 23
<i>The Milwaukee Sentinel</i> newspaper articles	Box 1, Folder 24
McNulty paper – “Throughout my Life”	Box 1, Folder 25
McNulty paper – “Leadership Skills”	Box 1, Folder 26
McNulty paper – “As a Candidate”	Box 1, Folder 27
McNulty paper – “Group Process Skills”	Box 1, Folder 28
McNulty paper – “Decision to Run”	Box 1, Folder 29
McNulty paper – “Educational Analysis”	Box 1, Folder 30
McNulty Binder – “My Log – it wishes it was still a tree”	Box 1, Folder 31

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<sup>20</sup> The McNulty collection are three boxes of materials from Mary Anne McNulty’s home. When Mary Anne passed away in 2009, her family allowed me to keep these three boxes with a bunch of paper. At the time, I did not know the wealth of material inside the boxes but I had an intuition that the papers might provide a glimpse of her earlier work in Milwaukee (McNulty collection in possession of Nájera, P. T).

**Box 2 – Political information on election campaigns**

Description	Location
Common Council File Cards – miscellaneous ordinances	Box 2, Folder 1
Donegan, Thomas – Common Council President	Box 2, Folder 2
Kleczka, Gerald – Congressman	Box 2, Folder 3
McNulty, Mary Anne - campaign literature 1972	Box 2, Folder 4
McNulty, Mary Anne - campaign literature 1973	Box 2, Folder 5
McNulty, Mary Anne - campaign literature 1988	Box 2, Folder 6
McNulty, Mary Anne - endorsements 1988	Box 2, Folder 7
McNulty, Mary Anne - stationary	Box 2, Folder 8
Photographs - 1973 election	Box 2, Folder 9
Political posters (random)	Box 2, Folder 10
<i>The Milwaukee Sentinel</i> - newspaper articles (1972, 1973, 1988)	Box 2, Folder 11
<i>The Milwaukee Journal</i> - newspaper articles (1972, 1973, 1988)	Box 2, Folder 12

**Box 3 – Collection of Awards**

Description	Location
Congress for Working America - plaque	Box 3
<i>Centro de la Comunidad Unida</i> (United Community Center) - plaque	Box 3
City of Milwaukee – Neighborhood Advisory Council - plaque	Box 3
Felix Mantilla Little League – plaque	Box 3
Legal Action of Wisconsin and its Volunteer Lawyers Project - plaque	Box 3
Puerto Rican Festivals Committee, Inc.- plaque	Box 3
Walker's Point Center for the Arts - artwork	Box 3
Women's Crisis Line - plaque	Box 3

## **APPENDIX D**

### **Mary Lou Massignani Affidavit**

Two years after Mary Anne McNulty moved to Milwaukee, Wisconsin, she completed a sworn affidavit about Mary Lou Massignani who faced a deportation hearing in April 1971. Lou Massignani, 29, an Italian who works in America's war on poverty here, faces deportation because she praised the Milwaukee 14, who protested the war in Vietnam (Sandin, 1970). Mary Anne's affidavit speaks to her willingness to share her opinion about Mary Lou being an exemplary resident, co-worker and friend of the Milwaukee's Spanish speaking community. In Mary Anne's affidavit stresses to the local government that although she might not be born and raised in Wisconsin, she has always abided by the laws, showed concern for others and should not be judged for working on issues related to poor people. The affidavit by Mary Anne McNulty was used as evidence to protest the deportation of Mary Lou Massignani. Mary Anne worked with Mary Lou Massignani at the Inner-City Development Project (ICDP) during her first two years in Milwaukee.

State of Wisconsin  
County of Milwaukee SS

A F F I D A V I T

Now comes Mary Anne McNulty, who under oath deposes and says:

I am presently living at 1412 West Madison, Milwaukee. I have been employed at the Mitchell Street, Inner City Development Project, 523 West Mitchell, Milwaukee since April of 1969 as a Community Worker.

I have known Mary Lou Massignani for the last two years. I first became acquainted with her while she was employed at Inner City Development Project, 1334 South 16th Street. During this time, Mary Lou has proven to be one of the most effective workers within the Spanish Speaking Community, especially in the area of welfare.

Mary Lou Massignani has never given any indication verbally or through her actions that would lead one to believe that she is either a communist or an anarchist.

Mary Lou is very aware of the need for improvements with in our society. She is also aware that it is because of the violence between people that many of the social problems now exist and that more violence would not bring the society closer to the goal of social justice. Mary Lou has always made use of the laws to insure the rights of people and I have not known her to advocate with myself or others any misuse of the law. Nor have I known her to advocate the destruction of public records, such as selective service record or any other official record.

Through my work relationship with Mary Lou, I have also come to know her as a good friend. I believe that she would like to see social justice become a reality for many of the people who do not presently experience it. Her work and life indicates her concern for others. I believe that a person like Mary Lou is very valuable, not only to the near South Side Community of Milwaukee, but also to the country. If we are ever to achieve the values of justice and freedom which this country aspires to, it will be because of the efforts and life style of Mary Lou and people like her. For these reasons, I believe it is most important that Mary Lou Massignani be allowed to stay in the United States.

Figure D.0.1. Sword affidavit for Mary Lou Massignani. Full text previous to figure.



## APPENDIX E

### Primary Sources

#### Interviews

- Amour, D. (2015, October 29). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Nicole\*<sup>21</sup> (2015, April 13). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Báez, T. (2015, October 28). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Biel, M. (2015, October 26). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Bonds, M. (2015, August 11). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Burkhardt, B. (2015, August 14). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Cabrera, C. (2015, October 8). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Chacon, E. (2015, December 15). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Coy Romano, K. (2015, September 11). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Cubias, D. (2015, December 7). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Dalia\*<sup>22</sup> (2015, October 26). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- D'Amato, M. (2016, December 3). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Dawson, M. (2015, March 26). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Eva\*<sup>23</sup> (2016, May 16). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Garcia, C. (2015, July 14). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Gleason, J. (2016, May 9). Interviewed by author (digital recording).
- Love, M. (2016, April 13). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

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<sup>21</sup> Not their real name. This person asked for complete anonymity in the project.

<sup>22</sup> Not their real name. This person asked for complete anonymity in the project.

<sup>23</sup> Not their real name. This person asked for complete anonymity in the project.

Lucy\*<sup>24</sup> (2016. January 6). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Monreal-Cameron, M. (2015. October 9). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Neumann-Ortiz, C. (2016. October 11). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Onorato, M. (2015. March 16). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Pine, C. (2016. May 10). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Rodriguez, M. (2015. April 10). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Spang, R. (2015. August 3). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Stokes, J.A. (2015. May 4). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Tina\*<sup>25</sup> (2015. March 11). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Zakhar, A. (2016. October 2). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

Witkowiak, J. (2016. December 14). Interviewed by author (digital recording).

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<sup>24</sup> Not their real name. This person asked for complete anonymity in the project.

<sup>25</sup> Not their real name. This person asked for complete anonymity in the project.

## **APPENDIX F**

### **List of Organizations**

AFL-CIO – American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations

AWOC – Agricultural Workers Organizing Committee

CAP – Community Action Programs

CBN – Committee for a Better Neighborhood

CCE – CB – *Centro Cultural Educativo – Chicano and Boricua* School

CDC – Community Development Corporation

CORE – Congress of Racial Equality

CSS – Council for the Spanish Speaking

CTWO – Center for Third World Organizing

CWBBAC – City-wide Bilingual Bicultural Advisory Committee

DNS – Department of Neighborhood Services

ESHAC – East Side Housing Action Committee

EU – Esperanza Unida

FBI – Federal Bureau of Investigation

FYCO – Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizations

ICDP – Inner City Development Project

LAUCR – Latin American Union for Civil Rights

LTF – Latina Task Force

MATA – Milwaukee Access Telecommunications Authority

MICAH – Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope

MUSIC – Milwaukee United School Integration Committee

MPD – Milwaukee Police Department

MAAP – Minority Activist Apprenticeship Program

MPS – Milwaukee Public Schools

NAACP – National Association for the Advancement of Colored People

NOHIM – New Opportunities for Homeownership in Milwaukee

PICO – Pacific Institute for Community Organization

RHC – Roberto Hernandez Center

SDC – Social Development Commission

SEIU – Services Employees International Union

SSOI – Spanish Speaking Outreach Institute

SWEAT Associates\* – not an acronym

UC – University Club

UCC – United Community Center

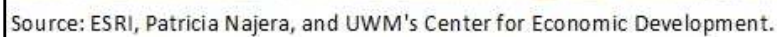
UMOS – United Migrant Opportunity Services

UWM – University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

WPYFC – Walker’s Point Youth and Family Center

WRC – Women’s Role Caucus

## Neighborhood Level Map of Near South Side Milwaukee



## APPENDIX H

### Biographical Information of Key Participants

	<b>Nationality</b>	<b>Age Decade(s) When Active</b>	<b>U.S. Citizenship Status</b>	<b>Socio Economic Class of Parents</b>	<b>Highest Level of Education</b>
Antonia	Puerto Rican	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Immigrant/ Citizen	Low-income	High School
Raquel	Chicana, Mexican- American	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Citizen/ Second Generation	Low-income	High School
Claudia	Puerto Rican and Mexican	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Immigrant	Low-income	College
Daniela	Central American*	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Immigrant	Low-income	College
Lucy	Chicana	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Citizen	Low-income	High School
Tina	South American*	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Immigrant	Low-income	College
Eva	Mexican American	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Citizen	Middle-income	High School
Paulina	Mexican- American	40s 1980s	Citizen/ Third Generation	Middle-income	High School
Nicole	Mexican American	20s 1970s - 1980s	Citizen/ Second Generation	Middle-income	College
Blanca	South American*	20s 1980s	Immigrant	Low-income	College
Marjorie	Mexican- American	20s 1980s	Citizen/ Second Generation	Middle-income	College
Isabela	Italian- American	30s 1970s	Citizen	Middle-income	High School
Mary Ann	Irish- American	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Citizen	Middle-income	College
Dalia	Polish- American	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Citizen	Middle-income	High School
Jacqueline	European American*	20s 1970s - 1980s	Citizen	Low-income	College
Eduardo	Chicano	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Citizen	Low-income	High School
Pablo	Puerto Rican	Teenager 1970s - 1980s	Citizen	Low-income	College

*\*did not want specific country revealed*

## Curriculum Vitae

Patricia Torres Nájera

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### Education:

- Ph.D., Urban Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2018  
Dissertation:  
**“We Were the Outsiders and Treated as Such:” Community Activism and the Intersections of Ethnicity, Gender, Class and Race Among Latinas in Milwaukee.** Committee Members: Kristin Sziarto (Chair), Anne Bonds, Joseph Rodriguez, Aaron Schutz and Arijit Sen.
- M.S. Urban Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 2003  
Master’s Thesis: **A Historical Examination of Goldmann’s Department Store on Historic Mitchell Street.**  
Committee Members: Judith Kenny (Chair), Joseph Rodriguez, and Joel Rast
- B.S. Economics, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee 1991

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### Awards:

- UWM Community-University: We Make a Difference Award 2018  
Advanced Degree Scholarship, Hispanic Professionals of Greater Milwaukee (HPGM) 2011

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### Academic Conference Presentations:

- Nájera, P. (April 2018). “*Chinibwaakaa (s/he is wise): The Story of an Elder in Residence*” in Keshena, Wisconsin.
- Nájera, P. (October 2017). “*Perspectives from Ganawandemaw: Protection of Language Revitalization and Language Ideologies in the Great Lakes Region*” in Montreal, Canada.
- Nájera, P. (October 2017). “*Gendered Divisions in the Space of Activism*,” International Colloquium on Latinos in the United States in Havana, Cuba.
- Nájera, P., Carney, M., Goodhue, B., (October 2013). “*This Bridge Called My Job: Intermediary Staff as Agents of Change*,” Imagining America/ Artists & Scholars in Public Life Conference in Syracuse, New York.
- Nájera, P., (November 2013). “*Co-Located Boundary Spanning Leader: An emerging model of community-campus partnerships*,” International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement Conference in Omaha, Nebraska.
- Nájera, P., Woywod., C., and Olin, N. (June 2013). “*Pathways to Art*,” Community Engaged Scholars Network at the University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee.
- Nájera, P., Woywod, C., and Olin, N. (October 2012). Presented “*Creative Collaborations-Community Based Learning through the Arts*,” at the Imagining America Conference in New York.
- Nájera (formerly Torres), P., Harcourt, J. (October 2009). Presented “*A framework for effective University – Community Partnerships*,” Coalition of Urban Metropolitan Universities (CUMU) Conference in Baltimore, Maryland.

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**Professional Experience:****University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee, Wisconsin***1998 - Present***Electa Quinney Institute, Director of Partnerships and Fund Development***2013 - Present***Primary Responsibilities:**

- Facilitate partnerships with 12 Tribal Nations in the State of Wisconsin and tribal organizations in the City of Milwaukee.
- Support faculty and community-wide research and interests related to improving the quality of life for Native American community.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- Awarded Research Grants supporting faculty/staff/students in language acquisition, theater performance, undergraduate research fellowship programs, and summer enrichment programs.
- Lead grant writer for the following awards: Spotted Eagle, Inc., \$ 35,000.00 (2018), Academic Affairs, UWM, \$ 40,000.00 (2018), Academic Staff Professional Development Award, UWM, \$1,550.00 (2017); U.S. Department of Education – Teacher and Administration Training Program, \$ 1,149,000.00 (2017); National Science Foundation - Documenting Endangered Languages Grant, \$340,000.00 (2017); Lannon Foundation - \$10,000.00 (2017); Research Growth Initiative - \$202,000 (2016); Charities Aid Foundation of America- \$7,000.00 (2016); Wisconsin Arts Board - \$3,020.00 (2014).
- Facilitated partnerships with local public service organizations including: Ignace Community Health Center, Southeast Oneida Tribal Services, Spotted Eagle, Inc. and Indian Community School, Saginaw-Chippewa Tribal College, and Lac Courte Oreilles Community College.

**Center for Urban Initiatives and Research, Assistant Director***1998 – 2013***Primary Responsibilities:**

- Responsibilities include identifying and facilitating partnerships with business organizations, government agencies, schools, nonprofit organizations with faculty, staff and students to enhance collaborative opportunities between the university and the community.
- Served as the Project Director on multiple community-building and student educational grants sponsored by foundations and federal agencies.
- Designed CUIR Undergraduate Research Program for undergraduate students to obtain paid internships in community partner organizations and taught the skills of applied research.
- Led strategic planning processes with neighborhood groups in the City of Milwaukee.
- Embedded Researcher at the United Community Center, a joint partnership with UWM, raised over \$3.2 million in extramural funding from 2006 - 2014. A model program replicated by the Medical College of Wisconsin and the UW-Madison.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- Awarded Research Grants supporting faculty/staff/students in university-community partnerships across a number of disciplines.



- Lead grant writer for the following awards: UWM Center for 21st Century Studies Fellowship, \$10,000.00 (2013); UWM - Cultures and Communities Program, \$3,000.00 (2012); UWM-Office of Undergraduate Research, \$175,000.00 (2012, 2011, 2010, 2009); U.S. Department of Education - Integrating the Arts in Language Arts and Math (ALMA) evaluation grant, \$12,000.00 (2010-2014); Airport Gateway Business Association, \$15,000.00 (2009); Zilber Foundation, \$40,000.00 (2009); U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development- Community Development Work Study Program, \$450,000.00 (2007, 2005, 2003, 2001, 1999).
- Directed the development and plan for strategic planning process for Zilber Quality of Life Plans in Walnut Way in 2009, Clarke Square in 2010 and Layton Boulevard West Neighbors in 2011.
- Designed a Residents Leadership Program for building social capital on neighborhood endeavors.
- Developed neighborhood plans with over 300 members in the community including: nonprofit representatives, residents, business owners, clergy, and public officials.
- Led and facilitated planning process with seven municipalities (South Milwaukee, Cudahy, Oak Creek, Franklin, Greenfield, St. Francis, and Milwaukee) with Mayors, Economic Development Specialists, Business Owners, appointed government officials and business leaders. These early efforts led to Milwaukee Airport Gateway Business Association (AGBA) and Aerotropolis Milwaukee.
- UCC and UWM partnership yielded \$3.2 million in extra-mural funding for programs and services in youth development, gerontology, cultural arts, education, and human services.
- CUIR Undergraduate Research Program is only of two centers on the UWM campus funded to support a cohort of 10-12 students annually.

**Milwaukee Inner City Congregations Allied for Hope, Community Organizer** *1992 – 1998*

**Primary Responsibilities:**

- Developed and implemented an 18-month plan of recruitment and outreach to ecumenical group in Milwaukee's Hispanic community.
- Responsible for recruiting membership into MICAH. Developed and led advisory committees comprised of 10 clergy, hundreds of church members.
- Worked with executive director on capital campaigns including: fundraising with private foundations, annual events, corporate, and government officials.
- Recruited and provided training for hundreds of individuals to serve on many task forces that would focus on the following pertinent issues in the community: drugs and crime, educational opportunities, recreational opportunities, affordable and decent housing, homeownership, and alcohol and drug treatment services.
- Organized and taught public policy workshops with resident and church leaders.

**Key Accomplishments:**

- M.I.C.A.H became a city-wide organization.

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**University, Departmental, and Disciplinary Services:**

Chancellor's Committee on Hispanic Serving Institute Committee	2017-present
Community Engaged Scholars Network Committee	2013
Department of Urban Studies – 50th Anniversary Committee	2013
Best Place to Work Planning Team – Code of Conduct Committee	2012
Digital Futures Committee	2011
Graduate School – Research and Planning	2011
Clarke Square's Economic Development Committee	2011
Milwaukee Community Engaged Research Network (MCERN)	2010
Proposal Reviewer, U.S. Department of Housing Development	2003
Member, Statewide Advisory Committee, Alternative to Incarceration Conference	2002
Member, Chancellor's Latino Advisory Committee	2001

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**Selected Community Wide Appointments, Committees and Civic Involvement**

School Governance Council, Ronald Reagan IB High School (MPS) – Chair of “Build Here Now” Committee	2017 to present
Emerge Wisconsin	2017
Secretary, Spotted Eagle, Inc.	2015-2017
Candidate for Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors – District 11	2016
Board Member, Fund Development Officer, Boys Scout Troop 228, Milwaukee	2005-2012
External Proposal Reviewer, UW – School of Medicine and Public Health	2007-2011
Board Member, Modjeska Youth Theater Company	2007-2008
Member, Executive Committee, UWM Latino Council	2005-2006
Member, Board of Directors, YWCA of Greater Milwaukee	2002-2006
Member, Advisory Board, Roberto Hernandez Center, UWM	2000-2003
Proposal Reviewer, State of Wisconsin, Brighter Future Proposal	2003
Member, Milwaukee Saves Campaign	2002-2003
Member, Get out the Vote Campaigns Committee	1996-2004
Member, Board of Directors, Latino Health Organization	1998-1999
Member, School Governance Council, Tippecanoe School (MPS)	1997-1998
Actor, Latino Arts Production – “ <i>Nuestro</i> Wisconsin at UCC”	1998

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**Civic Appointments:**

▪ Appointment to 27 <sup>th</sup> Street Business Improvement District	2017-Present
▪ Re-appointment to <b>City Plan Commission</b> by Mayor Tom Barrett (elected chair)	2006-Present
▪ Appointment to <b>City Plan Commission</b> by Mayor John O. Norquist	1999-2006